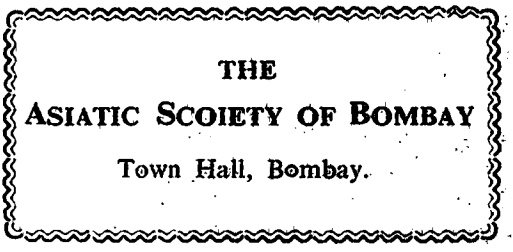
00067903

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 03 December, 2015

SERMONS

EACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,

GLASGOW.

67900

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

MINISTER OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR CHALMERS AND COLLINS;

WAUGH AND INNES, EDINBURGH;

R. M. TIMS, DUBLIN;

AND G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER, LONDON.

1823.

25 2
Cha/Ser
67903

Coera

Printed by W. Collins & Co.
Glasgow.

TO

THE MEMBERS

OF THE

CONGREGATION

OF

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE INSCRIBED,

WITH A LIVELY FEELING ON THE PART OF THEIR AUTHOR,

OF ALL THE KINDNESS AND GOOD WILL

WHICH HE HAS EXPERIENCED,

DURING THE TIME OF HIS CONNECTION WITH THEM,

AND

WITH EVERY ASSURANCE OF HIS AFFECTIONATE DESIRE

FOR THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons are of too miscellaneous a character to be arranged according to the succession of their topics, and they are, therefore, presented to the reader as so many compositions that are almost wholly independent of each other.

Two of the Sermons treat of Predestination, and the Sin against the Holy Ghost. There are topics of a highly speculative character, in the system of Christian Doctrine, which it is exceedingly difficult to manage, without interesting the curiosity rather than the conscience of the reader.

And yet, it is from their fitness of application to the conscience, that they derive their chief right to appear in a volume of Sermons; and I should not have ventured any publication upon either of these Doctrines, did I not think them capable of being so treated as to subserve the great interests of practical godliness.

The Sermons all relate to topics that I hold to be strictly congregational, with the exception of the thirteenth and fourteenth in the volume, which belong rather to Christian Economics, than to Christian Theology—to the "outer things of the house of God," rather than to the things of the sanctuary, or the intimacies of the spiritual life. I, perhaps, ought therefore to apologize for the appearance of these two in a volume of Congregational Sermons, and yet I have been led by experience to feel the religious importance of their sub-

ject, and I think that much injury has been sustained by the souls of our people, from the neglect of obvious principles both in the business of education, and in the business of public charity. I have, however, more comfort in discussing this argument from the press, than from the pulpit, which ought to be kept apart for loftier themes, and which seems to suffer a sort of desecration when employed as the vehicle for any thing else than the overtures of pardon to the sinner, and the hopes and duties of the believer.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE CONSTANCY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS AN ARGUMENT FOR THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN HIS WORD.

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants."—PSALM CXIX. 89, 90, 91. 17

SERMON II.

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—1 JOHN II. 15. 57

SERMON III.

THE SURE WARRANT OF A BELIEVER'S HOPE.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."—ROMANS V. 10. 90

SERMON IV.

THE RESTLESSNESS OF HUMAN AMBITION.

" How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?—O. that I had the wings of a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest."—PSALM XI. 1. and LV. 6. 119

SERMON V.

THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF VISIBLE THINGS.

" The things which are seen are temporal."—2 COR. IV. 18. . . 138

SERMON VI.

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

" Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."—ISAIAH XXIX. 9—12. 159

SERMON VII.

ON THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH.

" Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—2 PET. III. 13. 191

SERMON VIII.

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

" For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."—1 COR. IV. 20. 216

SERMON IX.

ON THE REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

" But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."—GAL. III. 23. 241

SERMON X.

ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

" And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."—MARK II. 27. 267

SERMON XI.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION.

" And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."—ACTS XXVII. 22, 31. 294

SERMON XII.

ON THE NATURE OF THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

" Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."—MATTH. XII. 31, 32. 326

SERMON XIII.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

" Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."—Eccles. iv. 13. 361

SERMON XIV.

ON THE DUTY AND THE MEANS OF CHRISTIANIZING OUR HOME POPULATION.

" And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."—Mark xvi. 15. 381

SERMON XV.

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND CONSIDERATION.

" The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."—Isa. i. 3. 405

SERMON I.

THE CONSTANCY OF GOD IN HIS WORKS AN ARGUMENT FOR THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN HIS WORD.

PSALM CXIX. 89, 90, 91.

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

IN these verses there is affirmed to be an analogy between the word of God and the works of God. It is said of his word, that it is settled in heaven, and that it sustains its faithfulness from one generation to another. It is said of his works, and more especially of those that are immediately around us, even of the earth which we inhabit, that as it was established at the first so it abideth afterwards. And then, as if to perfect the assimilation between them, it is said of both in the 91st verse, "They continue this

day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants;" thereby identifying the sureness of that word which proceeded from his lips, with the unfailing constancy of that Nature which was formed and is upholden by his hands.

The constancy of Nature is taught by universal experience, and even strikes the popular eye as the most characteristic of those features which have been impressed upon her. It may need the aid of philosophy to learn how unvarying Nature is in all her processes—how even her seeming anomalies can be traced to a law that is inflexible—how what might appear at first to be the caprices of her waywardness, are, in fact, the evolutions of a mechanism that never changes—and that the more thoroughly she is sifted and put to the test by the interrogations of the curious, the more certainly will they find that she walks by a rule which knows no abatement, and perseveres with obedient footstep in that even course, from which the eye of strictest scrutiny, has never yet detected one hair-breadth of deviation. It is no longer doubted by men of science, that every remaining semblance of irregularity in the universe is due, not to the fickleness of Nature, but to the ignorance of man—that her most hidden movements are so

ducted with a uniformity as rigorous as Fate—that even the fitful agitations of the weather have their law and their principle—that the intensity of every breeze, and the number of drops in every shower, and the formation of every cloud, and all the occurring alternations of storm and sunshine, and the endless shiftings of temperature, and those tremulous varieties of the air which our instruments have enabled us to discover, but have not enabled us to explain—that still, they follow each other by a method of succession, which, though greatly more intricate, is yet as absolute in itself as the order of the seasons, or the mathematical courses of astronomy. This is the impression of every philosophical mind with regard to Nature, and it is strengthened by each new accession that is made to science. The more we are acquainted with her, the more are we led to recognise her constancy; and to view her as a mighty though complicated machine, all whose results are sure, and all whose workings are invariable.

But there is enough of patent and palpable regularity in Nature, to give also to the popular mind, the same impression of her constancy. There is a gross and general experience that teaches the same lesson, and that has lodged in

every bosom a kind of secure and steadfast confidence in the uniformity of her processes. The very child knows and proceeds upon it. He is aware of an abiding character and property in the elements around him—and has already learned as much of the fire, and the water, and the food that he eats, and the firm ground that he treads upon, and even of the gravitation by which he must regulate his postures and his movements, as to prove, that infant though he be, he is fully initiated in the doctrine, that Nature has her laws and her ordinances, and that she continueth therein. And the proofs of this are ever multiplying along the journey of human observation: insomuch, that when we come to manhood, we read of Nature's constancy throughout every department of the visible world. It meets us wherever we turn our eyes. Both the day and the night bear witness to it. The silent revolutions of the firmament give it their pure testimony. Even those appearances in the heavens, at which superstition stood aghast, and imagined that Nature was on the eve of giving way, are the proudest trophies of that stability which reigns throughout her processes—of that unswerving consistency wherewith she prosecutes all her movements. And the lesson that is thus held forth to us from the

heavens above, is responded to by the earth below; just as the tides of ocean wait the footsteps of the moon, and, by an attendance kept up without change or intermission for thousands of years, would seem to connect the regularity of earth with the regularity of heaven. But, apart from these greater and simpler energies, we see a course and a uniformity everywhere. We recognise it in the mysteries of vegitation. We follow it through the successive stages of growth, and maturity, and decay, both in plants and animals. We discern it still more palpably in that beautiful circulation of the element of water, as it rolls its way by many thousand channels to the ocean—and, from the surface of this expanded reservoir, is again uplifted to the higher regions of the atmosphere—and is there dispersed in light and fleecy magazines over the four quarters of the globe—and at length accomplishes its orbit, by falling in showers on a world that waits to be refreshed by it. And all goes to impress us with the regularity of Nature, which in fact teems, throughout all its varieties, with power, and principle, and uniform laws of operation—and is viewed by us as a vast laboratory, all the progressions of which have a rigid and unfailing necessity stamped upon them.

Now, this contemplation has at times served to foster the atheism of philosophers. It has led them to deify Nature, and to make her immutability stand in the place of God. They seem impressed with the imagination, that had the Supreme Cause been a being who thinks, and wills, and acts as man does, on the impulse of a felt and a present motive, there would be more the appearance of spontaneous activity, and less of mute and unconscious mechanism in the administrations of the universe. It is the very unchangeableness of Nature, and the steadfastness of those great and mighty processes wherewith no living power that is superior to Nature, and is able to shift or to control her, is seen to interfere—it is this which seems to have impressed the notion of some blind and eternal fatality on certain men of loftiest but deluded genius. And, accordingly, in France, where the physical sciences have, of late, been the most cultivated, have there also been the most daring avowals of atheism. The universe has been affirmed to be an everlasting and indestructible effect; and from the abiding constancy that is seen in Nature, through all her departments, have they inferred, that thus it has always been, and that thus it will ever be.

But this atheistical impression that is derived from the constancy of Nature, is not peculiar to the disciples of philosophy. It is the familiar and the practical impression of every-day life. The world is apprehended to move on steady and unvarying principles of its own; and these secondary causes have usurped, in man's estimation, the throne of the Divinity. Nature in fact is personified into God: and as we look to the performance of a machine without thinking of its maker,—so the very exactness and certainty, wherewith the machinery of creation performs its evolutions, has thrown a disguise over the agency of the Creator. Should God interpose by miracle, or interfere by some striking and special manifestation of providence, then man is awakened to the recognition of him. But he loses sight of the Being who sits behind these visible elements, while he regards those attributes of constancy and power which appear in the elements themselves. They see no demonstration of a God, and they feel no need of him, while such unchanging, and such unfailing energy continues to operate in the visible world around them; and we need not go to the schools of ratiocination in quest of this infidelity, but may detect it in the bosoms of simple and unlettered men, who, unknown to themselves,

make a god of Nature, and just because of Nature's constancy; having no faith in the unseen Spirit who originated all and upholds all, and that, because all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.

Such has been the perverse effect of Nature's constancy on the alienated mind of man: but let us now attend to the true interpretation of it. God has, in the first instance, put into our minds a disposition to count on the uniformity of Nature, insomuch that we universally look for a recurrence of the same event in the same circumstances. This is not merely the belief of experience, but the belief of instinct. It is antecedent to all the findings of observation, and may be exemplified in the earliest stages of childhood. The infant who makes a noise on the table with his hand, for the first time, anticipates a repetition of the noise from a repetition of the stroke, with as much confidence as he who has witnessed, for years together, the invariableness wherewith these two terms of the succession have followed each other. Or, in other words, God, by putting this faith into every human creature, and making it a necessary part of his mental constitution, has taught him at all times to expect the like result in the like cir-

cumstances. He has thus virtually told him what is to happen, and what he has to look for in every given condition—and by its so happening accordingly, he just makes good the veracity of his own declaration. The man who leads me to expect that which he fails to accomplish, I would hold to be a deceiver. God has so framed the machinery of my perceptions, as that I am led irresistibly to expect, that everywhere events will follow each other in the very train in which I have ever been accustomed to observe them—and when God so sustains the uniformity of Nature, that in every instance it is rigidly so, he is just manifesting the faithfulness of his character. Were it otherwise, he would be practising a mockery on the expectation which he himself had inspired. God may be said to have promised to every human being, that Nature will be constant—if not by the whisper of an inward voice to every heart, at least by the force of an uncontrollable bias which he has impressed on every constitution. So that, when we behold Nature keeping by its constancy, we behold the God of Nature keeping by his faithfulness—and the system of visible things, with its general laws, and its successions which are invariable, instead of an opaque materialism to intercept from the view of mortals the face of the

Divinity, becomes the mirror which reflects upon them the truth that is unchangeable, the ordination that never fails.

Conceive that it had been otherwise—first, that man had no faith in the constancy of Nature—then how could all his experience have profited him? How could he have applied the recollections of his past, to the guidance of his future history? And, what would have been left to signalize the wisdom of mankind above that of veriest infancy? Or, suppose that he had the implicit faith in Nature's constancy, but that Nature was wanting in the fulfilment of it—that at every moment his intuitive reliance on this constancy, was met by some caprice or waywardness of Nature, which thwarted him in all his undertakings—that, instead of holding true to her announcements, she held the children of men in most distressful uncertainty, by the freaks and the falsities in which she ever indulged herself—and that every design of human foresight was thus liable to be broken up, by ever and anon the putting forth of some new fluctuation. Tell me, in this wild misrule of elements changing their properties, and events ever flitting from one method of succession to another, if man could subsist for a single day,

when all the accomplishments without, were thus at war with all the hopes and calculations within. In such a chaos and conflict as this, would not the foundations of human wisdom be utterly subverted? Would not man, with his powerful and perpetual tendency to proceed on the constancy of Nature, be tempted, at all times, and by the very constitution of his being, to proceed upon a falsehood? It were the way, in fact, to turn the administration of Nature into a system of deceit. The lessons of to-day, would be falsified by the events of to-morrow. He were indeed the father of lies who could be the author of such a regimen as this—and well may we rejoice in the strict order of the goodly universe which we inhabit, and regard it as a noble attestation to the wisdom and beneficence of its great Architect.

But it is more especially as an evidence of his truth, that the constancy of Nature is adverted to in our text. It is of his faithfulness unto all generations that mention is there made —and for the growth and the discipline of your piety, we know not a better practical habit than that of recognizing the unchangeable truth of God, throughout your daily and hourly experience of Nature's unchangeableness. Your

faith in it is of his working—and what a condition would you have been reduced to, had the faith which is within, not been met by an entire and unexcepted accordancy with the fulfilments that are without! He has not told you what to expect by the utterance of a voice—but he has taught you what to expect by the leadings and the intimations of a strong constitutional tendency—and, in virtue of this, there is not a human creature who does not believe, and almost as firmly as in his own existence, that fire will continue to burn, and water to cool, and matter to resist, and unsupported bodies to fall, and ocean to bear the adventurous vessel upon its surface, and the solid earth to uphold the tread of his footsteps; and that spring will appear again in her wonted smiles, and summer will glow into heat and brilliancy, and autumn will put on the same luxuriance as before, and winter, at its stated periods, revisit the world with her darkness and her storms. We cannot sum up these countless varieties of Nature; but the firm expectation is, that throughout them all, as she has been established, so she will abide to the day of her final dissolution. And I call upon you to recognize in Nature's constancy, the answer of Nature's God to this expectation. All these material agents are, in fact, the organs

by which he expresses his faithfulness to the world; and that unveering generality which reigns and continues everywhere, is but the perpetual demonstration of a truth that never varies, as well as of laws that never are rescinded. It is for us, that he upholds the world in all its regularity. It is for us, that he sustains so unviolably the march and the movement of those innumerable progressions, which are going on around us. It is in remembrance of his promises to us, that he meets all our anticipations of Nature's uniformity, with the evolutions of a law that is unalterable. It is because he is a God that cannot lie, that he will make no invasion on that wondrous correspondency which he *himself hath instituted* between the world *that is without*, and our *little* world *of* hopes, and projects, and anticipations that are within. By the constancy of Nature, he hath imprinted upon it the lesson of his own constancy—and that very characteristic wherewith some would fortify the ungodliness of their hearts, is the most impressive exhibition which can be given of God, as always faithful, and always the same.

This, then, is the real character which the constancy of Nature should lead us to assign

to him who is the Author of it. In every human understanding, he hath planted a universal instinct, by which all are led to believe, that Nature will persevere in her wonted courses, and that each succession of cause and effect which has been observed by us in the time that is past, will, while the world exists, be kept up invariably, and recur in the very same order through the time that is to come. This constancy, then, is as good as a promise that he has made unto all men, and all that is around us on earth or in heaven, proves how inflexibly the promise is adhered to. The chemist in his laboratory, as he questions Nature, may be almost said to put her to the torture, when tried in his hottest furnace, or probed by his searching analysis, to her innermost arcana, she by a spark, or an explosion, or an effervescence, or an evolving substance, makes her distinct replies to his investigations. And he repeats her answer to all his fellows in philosophy, and they meet in academic state and judgment to reiterate the question, and in every quarter of the globe her answer is the same—so that, let the experiment, though a thousand times repeated, only be alike in all its circumstances, the result which cometh forth is as rigidly alike, without deficiency, and without deviation. We know

how possible it is for these worshippers at the footstool of science, to make a divinity of matter; and that every new discovery of her secrets, should only rivet them more devotedly to her throne. But there is a God who liveth and sitteth there, and these unvarying responses of Nature, are all prompted by himself, and are but the utterances of his immutability. They are the replies of a God who never changes, and who hath adapted the whole materialism of creation to the constitution of every mind that he hath sent forth upon it. And to meet the expectation which he himself hath given of Nature's constancy, is he at each successive instant of time, vigilant and ready in every part of his vast dominions, to hold out to the eye of all observers, the perpetual and unfailing demonstration of it. The certainties of Nature and of Science, are in fact the vocables by which God announces his truth to the world—and when told how impossible it is that Nature can fluctuate, we are only told how impossible it is that the God of Nature can deceive us.

The doctrine that Nature is constant, when thus related, as it ought to be, with the doctrine that God is true, might well strengthen our confidence in him anew with every new expe-

rience of our history. There is not an hour or a moment, in which we may not verify the one—and, therefore, not an hour or a moment in which we may not invigorate the other. Every touch, and every look, and every taste, and every act of converse between our senses and the things that are without, brings home a new demonstration of the steadfastness of Nature, and along with it a new demonstration both of his steadfastness and of his faithfulness, who is the Governor of Nature. And the same lesson may be fetched from times and from places, that are far beyond the limits of our own personal history. It can be drawn from the retrospect of past ages, where, from the unvaried currency of those very processes which we now behold, we may learn the stability of all his ways, whose goings forth are of old, and from everlasting. It can be gathered from the most distant extremities of the earth, where Nature reigns with the same unwearied constancy, as it does around us—and where savages count as we do on a uniformity, from which she never falters. The lesson is commensurate with the whole system of things—and with an effulgence as broad as the face of creation, and as clear as the light which is poured over it, does it at once tell that Nature is unchangeably constant, and that God is unchangeably true.

And so it is, that in our text there are presented together, as if there was a tie of likeness between them—that the same God who is fixed as to the ordinances of Nature, is faithful as to the declarations of his word; and as all experience proves how firmly he may be trusted for the one, so is there an argument as strong as experience, to prove how firmly he may be trusted for the other. By his work in us, he hath awakened the expectation of a constancy in Nature, which he never disappoints. By his word to us, should he awaken the expectation of a certainty in his declarations, this he will never disappoint. It is because Nature is so fixed, that we apprehend the God of Nature to be so faithful. He who never falsifies the hope that hath arisen in every bosom, from the instinct which he himself hath communicated, will never falsify the hope that shall arise in any bosom from the express utterance of his voice. Were he a God in whose hand the processes of Nature were ever shifting, then might we conceive him a God from whose mouth the proclamations of grace had the like characters of variance and vacillation. But it is just because of our reliance on the one, that we feel so much of repose in our dependence upon the other—and the same God who is so unfailing in the ordinances

of his creation, do we hold to be equally unfailing in the ordinances of his word.

And it is strikingly accordant with these views, that Nature never has been known to recede from her constancy, but for the purpose of giving place and demonstration to the authority of the word. Once, in a season of miracle, did the word take the precedency of Nature, but ever since hath Nature resumed her courses, and is now proving, by her steadfastness, the authority of that, which she then proved to be authentic by her deviations. When the word was first ushered in, Nature gave way for a period, after which she moves in her wonted order, till the present system of things shall pass away, and that faith which is now upholden by Nature's constancy, shall then receive its accomplishment at Nature's dissolution. And O how God magnifieth his word above all his name, when he tells that heaven and earth shall pass away, but that his word shall not pass away—and that while his creation shall become a wreck, not one jot or one tittle of his testimony shall fail. The world passeth away—but the word endureth for ever—and if the faithfulness of God stand forth so legibly on the face of the temporary world, how surely may we reckon

on the faithfulness of that word, which has a vastly higher place in the counsels and fulfilments of eternity.

The argument may not be comprehended by all, but it will not be lost, should it lead any to feel a more emphatic certainty and meaning than before in the declarations of the Bible—and to conclude, that he, who for ages, hath stood so fixed to all his plans and purposes in Nature, will stand equally fixed to all that he proclaims, and to all that he promises in Revelation. To be in the hands of such a God, might well strike a terror into the hearts of the guilty—and that unrelenting death which, with all the sureness of an *immutable* law, is seen, before our eyes, to seize upon every individual of every species of our world, full well evinces how he, the uncompromising Lawgiver, will execute every utterance that he has made against the children of iniquity. And, on the other hand, how this very contemplation ought to encourage all who are looking to the announcements of the same God in the Gospel, and who perceive that there he has embarked the same truth, and the same unchangeableness, on the offers of mercy. All Nature gives testimony to this, that he cannot lie—and seeing that he has stamped such enduring

properties on the elements even of our perishable world, never should I falter from that confidence which he hath taught me to feel, when I think of that property wherewith the blood which was shed for me, cleanseth from all sin; and of that property wherewith the body which was broken, beareth the burden of all its penalties. He who hath so nobly met the faith that he has given unto all in the constancy of Nature, by a uniformity which knows no abatement, will meet the faith that he has given unto any in the certainty of grace, by a fulfilment unto every believer, which knows no exception.

And it is well to remark the difference that there is between the explanation given in the text, of Nature's constancy, and the impression which the mere students or disciples of Nature have of it. It is because of her constancy that they have been led to invest her, as it were, in properties of her own; that they have given a kind of independent power and stability to matter; that in the various energies which lie scattered over the field of visible contemplation, they see a native inherent virtue, which never for a single moment is slackened or suspended—and therefore imagine, that as no force from without seems necessary to sustain, so as little,

perhaps, is there need for any such force from without to originate. The mechanical certainty of all Nature's processes, as it appears in their eyes to supersede the demand for any upholding agency, so does it also supersede, in the silent imaginations of many, and according to the express and bold avowals of some, the demand for any creative agency. It is thus, that Nature is raised into a divinity, and has been made to reign over all, in the state and jurisdiction of an eternal fatalism ; and proud Science, which by wisdom knoweth not God, hath, in her march of discovery, seized upon the invariable certainties of Nature, those highest characteristics of his authority and wisdom and truth, as the instruments by which to disprove and to dethrone him.

Now compare this interpretation of monstrous and melancholy atheism, with that which the Bible gives, why all things move so invariably. It is because that all are thy servants. It is because they are all under the bidding of a God who has purposes from which he never falters, and hath issued promises from which he never fails. It is because the arrangements of his vast and capacious household are already ordered for the best, and all the elements of Nature are

the ministers by which he fulfils them. That is the master who has most honour and obedience from his domestics, throughout all whose ordinations, there runs a consistency from which he never deviates; and he best sustains his dignity in the midst of them, who, by mild but resistless sway, can regulate the successions of every hour, and affix his sure and appropriate service to every member of the family. It is when we see all, in any given time, at their respective places, and each distinct period of the day having its own distinct evolution of business or recreation, that we infer the wisdom of the instituted government, and how irrevocable the sanctions are by which it is upholden. The vexatious alternations of command and of countermand; the endless fancies of humour, and caprice, and waywardness, which ever and anon break forth, to the total overthrow of system; the perpetual innovations which none do foresee, and for which none, therefore, can possibly be prepared—these are not more harassing to the subject, than they are disparaging to the truth and authority of the superior. It is in the bosom of a well-conducted family, where you witness the sure dispensation of all the reward and encouragement which have been promised, and the unfailing execution of the disgrace and

the dismissal that are held forth to obstinate disobedience. Now those very qualities of which this uniformity is the test and the characteristic in the government of any human society, of these also is it the test and the characteristic in the government of Nature. It bespeaks the wisdom, and the authority, and the truth of him who framed and who administers. Let there be a King eternal, immortal, and invisible, and let this universe be his empire—and in all the rounds of its complex but unerring mechanism, do I recognize him as the only wise God. In the constancy of Nature, do I read the constancy and truth of that great master Spirit, who hath imprinted his own character on all that hath emanated from his power; and when told that throughout the mighty lapse of centuries, all the courses both of earth and of heaven, have been upholden as before, I only recognize the footsteps of him who is ever the same, and whose faithfulness is unto all generations. That perpetuity, and order, and ancient law of succession, which have subsisted so long, throughout the wide diversity of things, bear witness to the Lord of hosts, as still at the head of his well-marshalled family. The present age is only re-echoing the lesson of all past ages—and that spectacle, which has misled those who by wisdom

know not God, into dreary atheism, has enhanced every demonstration both of his veracity and power, to all intelligent worshippers. We know that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. We know that the whole of surrounding materialism stands forth, to this very hour, in all the inflexibility of her wonted characters. We know that heaven, and earth, and sea, still discharge the same functions, and subserve the very same beneficent processes. We know that astronomy plies the same rounds as before, that the cycles of the firmament move in their old and appointed order, and that the year circulates, as it has ever done, in grateful variety, over the face of an expectant world—but only because all are of God, and they continue this day according to his ordinances—for all are his servants.

Now it is just because the successions which take place in the economy of Nature, are so invariable, that we should expect the successions which take place in the economy of God's moral government to be equally invariable. That expectation which he never disappoints when it is the fruit of a universal instinct, he surely will never disappoint when it is the fruit of his own express and immediate revela-

tion. If because God hath so established it, it cometh to pass, then of whatsoever it may be affirmed that God hath so said it, it will come equally to pass. I should certainly look for the same character in the administrations of his special grace, that I, at all times, witness in the administrations of his ordinary providence. If I see in the system of his world, that the law by which two events follow each other, gives rise to a connection between them that never is dissolved, then should he say in his word, that there are certain invariable methods of succession, in virtue of which, when the first term of it occurs, the second is sure at all times to follow, I should be very sure in my anticipations, that it will indeed be most punctually and most rigidly so. It is thus, that the constancy of Nature is in fullest harmony with the authority of Revelation—and that, when fresh from the contemplation of the one, I would listen with most implicit faith to all the announcements of the other.

When we behold all to be so sure and settled in the works of God, then may we look for all being equally sure and settled in the word of God. Philosophy hath never yet detected one iota of deviation from the ordinances of Na-

ture—and never, therefore, may we conclude, shall the experience either of past or future ages, detect one iota of deviation from the ordinances of Revelation. He who so pointedly adheres to every plan that he hath established in creation, will as pointedly adhere to every proclamation that he hath uttered in Scripture. There is nought of the fast and loose in any of his processes—and whether in the terrible denunciations of Sinai, or those mild proffers of mercy that were sounded forth upon the world through Messiah, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, shall we alike experience that God is not to be mocked, and that with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

With this certainty, then, upon our spirits, let us now look not to the successions which he hath instituted in Nature, but to the successions which he hath announced to us in the word of his testimony—and let us, while so doing, fix and solemnize our thoughts by the consideration, that as God hath said it, so will he do it.

The first of these successions, then, on which we may count infallibly, is that which he hath proclaimed between sin and punishment. The

soul that sinneth it shall die. And here there is a common ground on which the certainties of divine revelation meet and are at one with the certainties of human experience. We are told in the Bible, that all have sinned, and that, therefore, death hath passed upon all men. The connection between these two terms is announced in Scripture to be invariable—and all observation tells us, that it is even so. Such was the sentence uttered in the hearing of our first parents; and all history can attest how God hath kept by the word of his threatening—and how this law of jurisprudence from heaven is realized before us upon earth, with all the certainty of a law of Nature. The death of man is just as stable and as essential a part of his physiology, as are his birth, or his expansion, or his maturity, or his decay. It looks as much a thing of organic necessity, as a thing of arbitrary institution—and here do we see blended into one exhibition, a certainty of the divine word that never fails, and a constancy in Nature that never is departed from. It is indeed a striking accordancy, that what in one view of it appears to be a uniform process of Nature, in another view of it, is but the unrelenting execution of a dread utterance from the God of Nature. From this contemplation may we gather, that

God is as certain in all his words, as he is constant in all his ways. Men can philosophize on the diseases of the human system—and the laborious treatise can be written on the class, and the character, and the symptoms, of each of them—and in our halls of learning, the ample demonstration can be given, and disciples may be taught how to judge and to prognosticate, and in what appearances to read the fell precursors of mortality—and death has so taken up its settled place among the immutabilities of Nature, that it is as familiarly treated in the lecture-rooms of science, as any other phenomena which Nature has to offer for the exercise of the human understanding. And, O how often are the smile and the stoutness of infidelity seen to mingle with this appalling contemplation—and how little will its hardy professors bear to be told, that what gives so dread a certainty to their speculation is, that the God of Nature and the God of the Bible, are one—that when they describe, in lofty nomenclature, the path of dying humanity, they only describe the way in which he fulfils upon it his irrevocable denunciation—that he is but doing now to the posterity of Adam what he told to Adam himself on his expulsion from paradise—and that, if the universality of death prove how

every law in the physics of creation is sure, it just as impressively proves, how every word of God's immediate utterance to man, or how every word of prophecy is equally sure.

And in every instance of mortality which you are called to witness, do we call upon you to read in it the intolerance of God for sin, and how unsparingly and unrelentingly it is, that God carries into effect his every utterance against it. The connection which he hath instituted between the two terms of sin and of death, should lead you from every appeal that is made to your senses by the one, to feel the force of an appeal to your conscience by the other. It proves the hatefulness of sin to God, and it also proves with what unfaltering constancy God will prosecute every threat, until he hath made an utter extirpation of sin from his presence. There is nought which can make more palpable the way in which God keeps every saying in his perpetual remembrance, and as surely proceeds upon it, than doth this universal plague wherewith he hath smitten every individual of our species, and carries off its successive generations from a world that sprung from his hand in all the bloom and vigour of immortality. When death makes entrance upon

a family, and, perhaps, seizes on that one member of it, all whose actual transgressions might be summed up in the outbreakings of an occasional waywardness, wherewith the smiles of infant gaiety were chequered—still how it demonstrates the unbending purposes of God against our present accursed nature, that in some one or other of its varieties, every specimen must die. And so it is, that from one age to another, he makes open manifestation to the world, that every utterance which hath fallen from him is sure; and that ocular proof is given to the character of him who is a Spirit, and is invisible; and that sense lends its testimony to the truth of God, and the truth of his Scripture; and that Nature, when rightly viewed, instead of placing its inquirers at atheistical variance with the Being who upholds it, holds out to us the most impressive commentary that can be given, on the reverence which is due to all his communications, even by demonstrating, that faith in his word is at unison with the findings of our daily observation.

But God hath further said of sin and of its consequences, what no observation of ours has yet realized. He hath told us of the judgment that cometh after death, and he hath told us

of the two diverse paths which lead from the judgment seat unto eternity. Of these we have not yet seen the verification, yet surely we have now seen enough to prepare us for the unfailing accomplishment of every utterance that cometh from the lips of God. The unexcepted death which we know cometh upon all men, for that all have sinned, might well convince us of the certainty of that second death which is threatened upon all who turn not from sin unto the Saviour. There is an indissoluble succession here between our sinning and our dying—and we ought now to be so aware of God as a God of precise and peremptory execution, as to look upon the succession being equally indissoluble, between our dying in sin now, and rising to everlasting condemnation hereafter. The sinner who wraps himself in delusive security—and that, because all things continue as they have done, does not reflect of this very characteristic, that it is indeed the most awful proof of God's immutable counsels, and to himself the most tremendous presage of all the ruin and wretchedness which have been denounced upon him. The spectacle of uniformity that is before his eyes, only goes to ascertain that as God hath purposed, so, without vacillation or inconstancy, will he ever perform. He hath already given a

sample, or an earnest of this, in the awful ravages of death; and we ask the sinner to behold, in the ever-recurring spectacle of moving funerals, and desolated families, the token of that still deeper perdition which awaits him. Let him not think that the God who deals his relentless inflictions here on every son and daughter of the species, will falter there from the work of vengeance that shall then descend on the heads of the impenitent. O how deceived then are all those ungodly, who have been building to themselves a safety and an exemption on the perpetuity of Nature! All the perpetuity which they have witnessed, is the pledge of a God who is unchangeable—and who, true to his threatening as to every other utterance which passes his lips, hath said in the hearing of men and of angels, that the soul which is in sin shall perish.

But, secondly, there is another succession announced to us in Scripture, and on the certainty of which we may place as firm a reliance as on any of the observed successions of Nature—even that which obtains between faith and salvation. He who believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but shall have life everlasting. The same truth which God hath embarked on the declarations of his wrath against the impenitent,

he hath also embarked on the declarations of his mercy to the believer. There is a law of continuity, as unfailing as any series of events in Nature, that binds with the present state of an obstinate sinner upon earth, all the horrors of his future wretchedness in hell—but there is also another law of continuity just as unfailing, that binds the present state of him who putteth faith in Christ here, with the triumphs and the transports of his coming glory hereafter. And thus it is, that what we read of God's constancy in the book of Nature, may well strengthen our every assurance in the promises of the Gospel. It is not in the recurrence of winter alone, and its desolations, that God manifests his adherence to established processes. There are many periodic evolutions of the bright and the beautiful along the march of his administrations—as the dawn of morn; and the grateful access of spring, with its many hues, and odours, and melodies; and the ripened abundance of harvest; and that glorious arch of heaven, which Science hath now appropriated as her own, but which nevertheless is placed there by God as the unfailing token of a sunshine already begun, and a storm now ended—all these come forth at appointed seasons, in a consecutive order, yet mark the footsteps of a beneficent Deity. And

so the economy of grace has its regular successions, which carry however a blessing in their train. The faith in Christ, to which we are invited upon earth, has its sure result, and its landing-place in heaven—and just with as unerring certainty as we behold in the courses of the firmament, will it be followed up by a life of virtue, and a death of hope, and a resurrection of joyfulness, and a voice of welcome at the judgment-seat, and a bright ascent into fields of ethereal blessedness, and an entrance upon glory, and a perpetual occupation in the city of the living God.

To all men hath he given a faith in the constancy of Nature, and he never disappoints it. To some men hath he given a faith in the promises of the Gospel, and he is ready to bestow it upon all who ask, or to perfect that which is lacking in it—and the one faith will as surely meet with its corresponding fulfilment as the other. The invariableness that reigns throughout the kingdom of Nature, guarantees the like invariableness in the kingdom of grace. He who is steadfast to all his appointments, will be true to all his declarations—and those very exhibitions of a strict and undeviating order in our universe, which have ministered to the irreligion

of a spurious philosophy, form a basis on which the believer can prop a firmer confidence than before, in all the spoken and all the written testimonies of God.

With a man of taste, and imagination, and science, and who is withal a disciple of the Lord Jesus, such an argument as this must shed a new interest and glory over his whole contemplation of visible things. He knows of his Saviour, that by him all things were made, and that by him too all things are upholden. The world, in fact, was created by that Being whose name is the Word, and from the features that are imprinted on the one, may he gather some of the leading characteristics of the other. More expressly will he infer from that sure and established order of Nature, in which the whole family of mankind are comprehended, that the more special family of believers are indeed encircled within the bond of a sure and a well-ordered covenant. In those beauteous regularities by which the one economy is marked, will he be led to recognize the "yea" and the "amen" which are stamped on the other economy—and when he learns that the certainties of science are unfailing, does he also learn that the sayings of Scripture are unalterable. Both he knows to

emanate from the same source; and every new experience of Nature's constancy, will just rivet him more tenaciously than before to the doctrine and the declarations of his Bible. Furnished with such a method of interpretation as this, let him go abroad upon Nature, and all that he sees will heighten and establish the hopes which Revelation hath awakened. Every recurrence of the same phenomena as before, will be to him a distinct testimony to the faithfulness of God. The very hours will bear witness to it. The lengthening shades of even will repeat the lesson held out to him by the light of early day—and when night unveils to his eye the many splendours of the firmament, will every traveller on his circuit there, speak to him of that mighty and invisible King, all whose ordinations are sure. And this manifestation from the face of heaven, will be reflected to him by the panorama upon earth. Even the buds which come forth at their appointed season on the leafless branches; and the springing up of the flowers and the herbage, on the spots of ground from which they had disappeared; and that month of vocal harmony wherewith the mute atmosphere is gladdened as before, with the notes of joyous festival; and so, the regular march of the advancing year through all its footsteps of revival, and progress, and ma-

turity, and decay—these are to him but the diversified tokens of a God whom he can trust, because of a God who changeth not. To his eyes, the world reflects upon the word the lesson of its own wondrous harmony; and his science, instead of a meteor that lures him from the greater light of Revelation, serves him as a pedestal on which the stability of Scripture is more firmly upholden.

The man who is accustomed to view aright the uniformity of Nature's sequences, will be more impressed with the certainty of that sequence which is announced in the Bible between faith and salvation—and he of all others, should re-assure his hopes of immortality, when he reads, that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls. In this secure and wealthy place, let him take up his rest, and rejoice himself greatly with that God who has so multiplied upon him the evidences of his faithfulness. Let him henceforth feel that he is in the hands of one who never deviates, and who cannot lie—and who, as he never by one act of caprice, hath mocked the dependence that is built on the foundation of human experience, so, never by one act of treachery, will he mock the dependence that is built on the foundation of the divine testimony. And more particularly, let him think

of Christ, who hath all the promises in his hand, that to him also all power has been committed in heaven and in earth—and that presiding therefore, as he does, over that visible administration, of which constancy is the unfailing attribute, he by this hath given us the best pledge of a truth that abideth the same, to day, and yesterday, and for ever.

We are aware, that no argument can of itself work in you the faith of the Gospel—that words and reasons, and illustrations, may be multiplied without end, and yet be of no efficacy—that if the simple manifestation of the Spirit be withheld, the expounder of Scripture, and of all its analogies with creation or Providence, will lose his labour—and while it is his part to prosecute these to the uttermost, yet nought will he find more surely and experimentally true, than that without a special interposition of light from on high, he runneth in vain, and wearieth himself in vain. It is for him to ply the instrument, it is for God to give unto it the power which availeth. We are told of Christ, on his throne of mediatorship, that he hath all the energies of Nature at command, and up to this hour do we know with what a steady and unfaltering hand he hath wielded them. Look to the pro-

mise as equally steadfast, of "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"—and come even now to his own appointed ordinance in the like confidence of a fellowship with him, as you would to any of the scenes or ordinations of Nature, and in the confidence that there the Lord of Nature will prove himself the same that He has ever been.* The blood that was announced many centuries ago to cleanse from all sin, cleanseth still. The body which hath borne in all past ages the iniquity of believers, beareth it still. That faith which appropriates Christ and all the benefits of his purchase, to the soul, still performs the same office. And that magnificent economy of Nature which was established at the first, and so abideth, is but the symbol of that higher economy of grace which continueth to this day according to all its ordinances.

"Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," says the Saviour, "shall never die." When you sit down at his table, you eat the bread, and you drink the wine by which these are represented—and if this be done worthily,

* This Sermon was delivered on the morning of a Communion Sabbath.

if there be a right correspondence between the hand and the heart in this sacramental service, then by faith do you receive the benefits of the shed blood, and the broken body; and your so doing will as surely as any succession takes place in the instituted courses of Nature, be followed up by your blessed immortality. And the brighter your hopes of glory hereafter, the holier will you be in all your acts and affections here. The character even now will receive a tinge from the prospect that is before you—and the habitual anticipation of heaven will bring down both of its charity and its sacredness upon your heart. He who hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure—and even from the present, if a true approach to the gate of his sanctuary, will you carry a portion of his spirit away with you. In partaking of these, his consecrated elements, you become partakers of his gentleness and devotion, and unwearied beneficence—and because like him in time, you will live with him through eternity.

SERMON II.

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION.

1 JOHN II. 15.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

THERE are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or, by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one. My purpose is to show, that from the constitu-

tion of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual—and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it. After having accomplished this purpose, I shall attempt a few practical observations.

Love may be regarded in two different conditions. The first is, when its object is at a distance, and then it becomes love in a state of desire. The second is, when its object is in possession, and then it becomes love in a state of indulgence. Under the impulse of desire, man feels himself urged onward in some path or pursuit of activity for its gratification. The faculties of his mind are put into busy exercise. In the steady direction of one great and engrossing interest, his attention is recalled from the many reveries into which it might otherwise have wandered; and the powers of his body are forced away from an indolence in which it else might have languished; and that time is crowded with occupation, which but for some object of keen and devoted ambition, might have drivelled along in successive hours of weariness and distaste—and though hope does not always enliven, and success does not always

crown this career of exertion, yet in the midst of this very variety, and with the alternations of occasional disappointment, is the machinery of the whole man kept in a sort of congenial play, and upholden in that tone and temper which are most agreeable to it. Insomuch, that *if*, through the extirpation of that desire which forms the originating principle of all this movement, the machinery were to stop, and to receive no impulse from another desire substituted in its place, the man would be left with all his propensities to action in a state of most painful and unnatural abandonment. A sensitive being suffers, and is in violence, if, after having thoroughly rested from his fatigue, or been relieved from his pain, he continue in possession of powers without any excitement to these powers; if he possess a capacity of desire without having an object of desire; or if he have a spare energy upon his person, without a counterpart, and without a stimulus to call it into operation. The misery of such a condition is often realized by him who is retired from business, or who is retired from law, or who is even retired from the occupations of the chase, and of the gaming table. Such is the demand of our nature for an object in pursuit, that no accumulation of previous success can extinguish it—

and thus it is, that the most prosperous merchant, and the most victorious general, and the most fortunate gamester, when the labour of their respective vocations has come to a close, are often found to languish in the midst of all their acquisitions, as if out of their kindred and rejoicing element. It is quite in vain with such a constitutional appetite for employment in man, to attempt cutting away from him the spring or the principle of one employment, without providing him with another. The whole heart and habit will rise in resistance against such an undertaking. The else unoccupied female who spends the hours of every evening at some play of hazard, knows as well as you, that the pecuniary gain, or the honourable triumph of a successful contest, are altogether paltry. It is not such a demonstration of vanity as this that will force her away from her dear and delightful occupation. The habit cannot so be displaced, as to leave nothing but a negative and cheerless vacancy behind it—though it may so be supplanted as to be followed up by another habit of employment, to which the power of some new affection has constrained her. It is willingly suspended, for example, on any single evening, should the time that wont to be allotted to gaming, require to be spent on the preparations of

an approaching assembly. The ascendant power of a second affection will do, what no exposition however forcible, of the folly and worthlessness of the first, ever could effectuate. And it is the same in the great world. You never will be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits, by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way else, but by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man intent and busied with the prosecution of his objects, to a dead stand, you have not merely to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects—but you have to encounter the pleasure which he feels in the very prosecution of them. It is not enough, then, that you dissipate the charm, by your moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. You must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former. It is this which stamps an impotency on all moral and pathetic declamation about the insignificance of the world. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a

trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration. If to be without desire and without exertion altogether, is a state of violence and discomfort, then the present desire, with its correspondent train of exertion, is not to be got rid of simply by destroying it. It must be by substituting another desire, and another line or habit of exertion in its place—and the most effectual way of withdrawing the mind from one object, is not by turning it away upon desolate and unpeopled vacancy—but by presenting to its regards another object still more alluring.

These remarks apply not merely to love considered in its state of desire for an object not yet obtained. They apply also to love considered in its state of indulgence, or placid gratification, with an object already in possession. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom, that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering—but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination.

But what cannot be thus destroyed, may be dispossessed—and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination—and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy—and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, but it is because drawn into the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable. Its adhesion to that on which it has fastened the preference of its regards, cannot willingly be overcome by the rending away of a simple separation. It can be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference. Such is the grasping tendency of the

human heart, that it must have a something to lay hold of—and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, or of any, but it cannot be desolated of all. Let there be a breathing and a sensitive heart, but without a liking and without affinity to any of the things that are around it, and in a state of cheerless abandonment, it would be alive to nothing but the burden of its own consciousness, and feel it to be intolerable. It would make no difference to its owner, whether he dwelt in the midst of a gay and goodly world, or placed afar beyond the outskirts of creation, he dwelt a solitary unit in dark and unpeopled nothingness. The heart must have something to cling to—and never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself, of all its attachments, that there shall not be one remaining object that can draw or solicit it.

The misery of a heart thus bereft of all relish for that which wont to minister enjoyment, is strikingly exemplified in those, who, satiated with indulgence, have been so belaboured, as it

were, with the variety and the poignancy of the pleasurable sensations that they have experienced, that they are at length fatigued out of all capacity for sensation whatever. The disease of ennui is more frequent in the French metropolis, where amusement is more exclusively the occupation of the higher classes, than it is in the British metropolis, where the longings of the heart are more diversified by the resources of business and politics. There are the votaries of fashion, who, in this way, have at length become the victims of fashionable excess—in whom the very multitude of their enjoyments, has at last extinguished their power of enjoyment—who, with the gratifications of art and nature at command, now look upon all that is around them with an eye of tastelessness —who, plied with the delights of sense and of splendour even to weariness, and incapable of higher delights, have come to the end of all their perfection, and like Solomon of old, found it to be vanity and vexation. The man whose heart has thus been turned into a desert, can vouch for the insupportable languor which must ensue, when one affection is thus plucked away from the bosom, without another to replace it. It is not necessary that a man receive pain from any thing, in order to become miser-

able. It is barely enough that he looks with distaste to every thing—and in that asylum which is the repository of minds out of joint, and where the organ of feeling as well as the organ of intellect, has been impaired, it is not in the cell of loud and frantic outcries, where you will meet with the acme of mental suffering. But that is the individual who outpeers in wretchedness all his fellows, who throughout the whole expanse of nature and society, meets not an object that has at all the power to detain or to interest him; who neither in earth beneath, nor in heaven above, knows of a single charm to which his heart can send forth one desirous or responding movement; to whom the world, in his eye a vast and empty desolation, has left him nothing but his own consciousness to feed upon —dead to all that is without him, and alive to nothing but to the load of his own torpid and useless existence.

It will now be seen, perhaps, why it is that the heart keeps by its present affections with so much tenacity—when the attempt is, to do them away by a mere process of extirpation. It will not consent to be so desolated. The strong man, whose dwelling-place is there, may be compelled to give way to another occupier—but

unless another stronger than he, has power to dispossess and to succeed him, he will keep his present lodgment unviolable. The heart would revolt against its own emptiness. It could not bear to be so left in a state of waste and cheerless insipidity. The moralist who tries such a process of dispossession as this upon the heart, is thwarted at every step by the recoil of its own mechanism. You have all heard that Nature abhors a vacuum. Such at least is the nature of the heart, that though the room which is in it may change one inmate for another, it cannot be left void without the pain of most intolerable suffering. It is not enough then to argue the folly of an existing affection. It is not enough, in the terms of a forcible or an affecting demonstration, to make good the evanescence of its object. It may not even be enough to associate the threats and the terrors of some coming vengeance, with the indulgence of it. The heart may still resist the every application, by obedience to which, it would finally be conducted to a state so much at war with all its appetites as that of downright inanition. So to tear away an affection from the heart, as to leave it bare of all its regards, and of all its preferences, were a hard and hopeless undertaking—and it would appear as if the alone powerful engine of dispos-

session, were to bring the mastery of another affection to bear upon it.

We know not a more sweeping interdict upon the affections of Nature, than that which is delivered by the Apostle in the verse before us. To bid a man, into whom there has not yet entered the great and ascendant influence of the principle of regeneration—to bid him withdraw his love from all the things that are in the world, is to bid him give up all the affections that are in his heart. The world is the all of a natural man. He has not a taste nor a desire, that points not to a something placed within the confines of its visible horizon. He loves nothing above it, and he cares for nothing beyond it; and to bid him love not the world, is to pass a sentence of expulsion on all the inmates of his bosom. To estimate the magnitude and the difficulty of such a surrender, let us only think that it were just as arduous to prevail on him not to love wealth, which is but one of the things in the world, as to prevail on him to set wilful fire to his own property. This he might do with sore and painful reluctance, if he saw that the salvation of his life hung upon it. But this he would do willingly, if he saw that a new property of tenfold value was instantly to emerge from the wreck of

the old one. In this case there is something more than the mere displacement of an affection. There is the overbearing of one affection by another. But to desolate his heart of all love for the things of the world, without the substitution of any love in its place, were to him a process of as unnatural violence, as to destroy all the things that he has in the world, and give him nothing in their room. So that, if to love not the world be indispensable to one's Christianity, then the crucifixion of the old man is not too strong a term to mark that transition in his history, when all old things are done away, and all things become new.

We hope that by this time, you understand the impotency of a mere demonstration of this world's insignificance. Its sole practical effect, if it had any, would be to leave the heart in a state which to every heart is insupportable, and that is a mere state of nakedness and negation. You may remember the fond and unbroken tenacity with which your heart has often recurred to pursuits, over the utter frivolity of which it sighed and wept but yesterday. The arithmetic of your short-lived days, may on Sabbath make the clearest impression upon your understanding—and from his fancied bed of death, may the

preacher cause a voice to descend in rebuke and mockery on all the pursuits of earthliness—and as he pictures before you the fleeting generations of men, with the absorbing grave, whither all the joys and interests of the world hasten to their sure and speedy oblivion, may you, touched and solemnized by his argument, feel for a moment as if on the eve of a practical and permanent emancipation from a scene of so much vanity. But the morrow comes, and the business of the world, and the objects of the world, and the moving forces of the world come along with it—and the machinery of the heart, in virtue of which it must have something to grasp, or something to adhere to, brings it under a kind of moral necessity to be actuated just as before—and in utter repulsion towards a state so unkindly as that of being frozen out both of delight and of desire, does it feel all the warmth and the urgency of its wonted solicitations—nor in the habit and history of the whole man, can we detect so much as one symptom of the new creature—so that the church, instead of being to him a school of obedience, has been a mere sauntering place for the luxury of a passing and theatrical emotion; and the preaching which is mighty to compel the attendance of multitudes, which is mighty to still and to solemnize the

hearers into a kind of tragic sensibility, which is mighty in the play of variety and vigour that it can keep up around the imagination, is not mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? If the throne which is placed there, must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him, than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure his willing admittance, and taking unto himself his great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the for-

mer, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away, and all things are to become new.

To obliterate all our present affections, by simply expunging them, and so as to leave the seat of them unoccupied, would be to destroy the old character, and to substitute no new character in its place. But when they take their departure upon the ingress of other visitors, when they resign their sway to the power and the predominance of new affections, when abandoning the heart to solitude, they merely give place to a successor who turns it into as busy a residence of desire, and interest, and expectation as before—there is nothing in all this to thwart or to overbear any of the laws of our sentient nature—and we see how, in fullest accordance with the mechanism of the heart, a great moral revolution may be made to take place upon it.

This, we trust, will explain the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. The love of God, and the love of the world, are two affections, not merely in a state of rivalship, but in a state of

enmity—and that so irreconcilable, that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom. We have already affirmed how impossible it were for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it, and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted, and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one. Nothing can exceed the magnitude of the required change in a man's character—when bidden as he is in the New Testament, to love not the world; no, nor any of the things that are in the world—for this so comprehends all that is dear to him in existence, as to be equivalent to a command of self-annihilation. But the same revelation which dictates so mighty an obedience, places within our reach as mighty an instrument of obedience. It brings for admittance, to the very door of our heart, an affection which once seated upon its throne, will either subordinate every previous inmate, or bid it away. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind, him who made the world, and with this peculiarity, which is all its own—that in the Gospel do we so behold God, as that we may love God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners—and where our desire after

him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every approach that is not made to him through the appointed Mediator. It is the bringing in of this better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God—and to live without hope, is to live without God, and if the heart be without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can dispost it from this ascendancy. It is when he stands dismantled of the terrors which belong to him as an offended lawgiver, and when we are enabled by faith, which is his own gift, to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and to hear his beseeching voice, as it protests good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will to a full pardon, and a gracious acceptance —it is then, that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerating bosom. It is when released from the spirit of bondage, with which love cannot dwell, and when admitted into the number of God's children, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the spirit of adoption is poured upon us—it is then that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominant affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way in which deliver-

ance is possible. And that faith which is revealed to us from heaven, as indispensable to a sinner's justification in the sight of God, is also the instrument of the greatest of all moral and spiritual achievements on a nature dead to the influence, and beyond the reach of every other application.

Thus may we come to perceive what it is that makes the most effective kind of preaching. It is not enough to hold out to the world's eye the mirror of its own imperfections. It is not enough to come forth with a demonstration, however pathetic, of the evanescent character of all its enjoyments. It is not enough to travel the walk of experience along with you, and speak to your own conscience, and your own recollection of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the deceitfulness of all that the heart is set upon. There is many a bearer of the Gospel message, who has not shrewdness of natural discernment enough, and who has not power of characteristic description enough, and who has not the talent of moral delineation enough, to present you with a vivid and faithful sketch of the existing follies of society. But that very corruption which he has not the faculty of representing in its visible details, he may practically be the instrument of eradicating in its principle.

Let him be but a faithful expounder of the gospel testimony.—Unable as he may be to apply a descriptive hand to the character of the present world, let him but report with accuracy the matter which revelation has brought to him from a distant world,—unskilled as he is in the work of so anatomizing the heart, as with the power of a novelist to create a graphical or impressive exhibition of the worthlessness of its many affections—let him only deal in those mysteries of peculiar doctrine, on which the best of novelists have thrown the wantonness of their derision. He may not be able, with the eye of shrewd and satirical observation, to expose to the ready recognition of his hearers, the desires of worldliness—but with the tidings of the gospel in commission, he may wield the only engine that can extirpate them. He cannot do what some have done, when, as if by the hand of a magician, they have brought out to view, from the hidden recesses of our nature, the foibles and lurking appetites which belong to it.—But he has a truth in his possession, which into whatever heart it enters, will, like the rod of Aaron, swallow up them all—and unqualified as he may be, to describe the old man in all the nicer shading of his natural and constitutional varieties, with him is deposited that ascendant

influence under which the leading tastes and tendencies of the old man are destroyed, and he becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us not cease then to ply the only instrument of powerful and positive operation, to do away from you the love of the world. Let us try every legitimate method of finding access to your hearts for the love of him who is greater than the world. For this purpose, let us, if possible, clear away that shroud of unbelief which so hides and darkens the face of the Deity. Let us insist on his claims to your affection—and whether in the shape of gratitude, or in the shape of esteem, let us never cease to affirm, that in the whole of that wondrous economy, the purpose of which is to reclaim a sinful world unto himself—he, the God of love, so sets himself forth in characters of endearment, that nought but faith, and nought but understanding, are wanting, on your part, to call forth the love of your hearts back again.

And here let me advert to the incredulity of a worldly man; when he brings his own sound and secular experience to bear upon the high doctrines of Christianity—when he looks on re-

generation as a thing impossible—when feeling as he does, the obstinacies of his own heart on the side of things present, and casting an intelligent eye, much exercised perhaps in the observation of human life, on the equal obstinacies of all who are around him, he pronounces this whole matter about the crucifixion of the old man, and the resurrection of a new man in his place, to be in downright opposition to all that is known and witnessed of the real nature of humanity. We think that we have seen such men, who, firmly trenched in their own vigorous and homebred sagacity, and shrewdly regardful of all that passes before them through the week, and upon the scenes of ordinary business, look on that transition of the heart by which it gradually dies unto time, and awakens in all the life of a new-felt and ever-growing desire towards God, as a mere Sabbath speculation; and who thus, with all their attention engrossed upon the concerns of earthliness, continue unmoved, to the end of their days, amongst the feelings, and the appetites, and the pursuits of earthliness. If the thought of death, and another state of being after it, comes across them at all, it is not with a change so radical as that of being born again, that they ever connect the idea of preparation. They have some vague concep-

tion of its being quite enough that they acquit themselves in some decent and tolerable way of their relative obligations; and that, upon the strength of some such social and domestic moralities as are often realized by him into whose heart the love of God has never entered, they will be transplanted in safety from this world, where God is the Being with whom it may almost be said, that they have had nothing to do, to that world where God is the Being with whom they will have mainly and immediately to do throughout all eternity. They admit all that is said of the utter vanity of time, when taken up with as a resting place. But they resist every application made upon the heart of man, with the view of so shifting its tendencies, that it shall not henceforth find in the interests of time, all its rest and all its refreshment. They, in fact, regard such an attempt as an enterprise that is altogether aerial—and with a tone of secular wisdom, caught from the familiarities of every-day experience, do they see a visionary character in all that is said of setting our affections on the things that are above; and of walking by faith; and of keeping our hearts in such a love of God as shall shut out from them the love of the world; and of having no confidence in the flesh; and of so renouncing earthly things as to have our conversation in heaven.

Now, it is altogether worthy of being remarked of those men who thus disrelish spiritual Christianity, and, in fact, deem it an impracticable acquirement, how much of a piece their incredulity about the demands of Christianity, and their incredulity about the doctrines of Christianity, are with one another. No wonder that they feel the work of the New Testament to be beyond their strength, so long as they hold the words of the New Testament to be beneath their attention. Neither they nor any one else can dispossess the heart of an old affection, but by the expulsive power of a new one—and, if that new affection be the love of God, neither they nor any one else can be made to entertain it, but on such a representation of the Deity, as shall draw the heart of the sinner towards him. Now it is just their unbelief which screens from the discernment of their minds this representation. They do not see the love of God in sending his Son unto the world. They do not see the expression of his tenderness to men, in sparing him not, but giving him up unto the death for us all. They do not see the sufficiency of the atonement, or the sufferings that were endured by him who bore the burden that sinners should have borne. They do not see the blended holiness and compassion of the Godhead, in that he

passed by the transgressions of his creatures, yet could not pass them by without an expiation. It is a mystery to them, how a man should pass to the state of godliness from a state of nature—but had they only a believing view of God manifest in the flesh, this would resolve for them the whole mystery of godliness. As it is, they cannot get quit of their old affections, because they are out of sight from all those truths which have influence to raise a new one. They are like the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, when required to make bricks without straw—they cannot love God, while they want the only food which can aliment this affection in a sinner's bosom—and however great their errors may be both in resisting the demands of the Gospel as *impracticable*, and in rejecting the doctrines of the Gospel as inadmissible, yet there is not a spiritual man (and it is the prerogative of him who is spiritual to judge all men) who will not perceive that there is a consistency in these errors.

But if there be a consistency in the errors, in like manner is there a consistency in the truths which are opposite to them. The man who believes in the peculiar doctrines, will readily bow to the peculiar demands of Christianity.

When he is told to love God supremely, this may startle another, but it will not startle him to whom God has been revealed in peace, and in pardon, and in all the freeness of an offered reconciliation. When told to shut out the world from his heart, this may be impossible with him who has nothing to replace it—but not impossible with him, who has found in God a sure and a satisfying portion. When told to withdraw his affections from the things that are beneath, this were laying an order of self-extinction upon the man, who knows not another quarter in the whole sphere of his contemplation, to which he could transfer them—but it were not grievous to him whose view has been opened up to the loveliness and glory of the things that are above, and can there find for every feeling of his soul, a most ample and delighted occupation. When told to look not to the things that are seen and temporal, this were blotting out the light of all that is visible from the prospect of him in whose eye there is a wall of partition between guilty nature and the joys of eternity—but he who believes that Christ hath broken down this wall, finds a gathering radiance upon his soul, as he looks onwards in faith to the things that are unseen and eternal. Tell a man to be holy—and how can he compass such a per-

formance, when his alone fellowship with holiness is a fellowship of despair? It is the atonement of the cross reconciling the holiness of the lawgiver with the safety of the offender, that hath opened the way for a sanctifying influence into the sinner's heart, and he can take a kindred impression from the character of God now brought nigh, and now at peace with him. Separate the demand from the doctrine, and you have either a system of righteousness that is impracticable, or a barren orthodoxy. Bring the demand and the doctrine together—and the true disciple of Christ is able to do the one, through the other strengthening him. The motive is adequate to the movement; and the bidden obedience of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his strength, just because the doctrine of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his acceptance. The shield of faith, and the hope of salvation, and the Word of God, and the girdle of truth—these are the armour that he has put on; and with these the battle is won, and the eminence is reached, and the man stands on the vantage ground of a new field, and a new prospect. The effect is great, but the cause is equal to it—and stupendous as this moral resurrection to the precepts of Christianity, undoubtedly is, there is an element of strength

enough to give it being and continuance in the principles of Christianity.

The object of the Gospel is both to pacify the sinner's conscience, and to purify his heart; and it is of importance to observe, that what mars the one of these objects, mars the other also. The best way of casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and by the love of what is good, to expel the love of what is evil. Thus it is, that the freer the Gospel, the more sanctifying is the Gospel; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness. This is one of the secrets of the Christian life, that the more a man holds of God as a pensioner, the greater is the payment of service that he renders back again. On the tenure of "Do this and live," a spirit of fearfulness is sure to enter; and the jealousies of a legal bargain chase away all confidence from the intercourse between God and man; and the creature striving to be square and even with his Creator, is, in fact, pursuing all the while his own selfishness, instead of God's glory; and with all the conformities which he labours to accomplish, the soul of obedience is not there, the mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed under such an

economy ever can be. It is only when, as in the Gospel, acceptance is bestowed as a present, without money and without price, that the security which man feels in God is placed beyond the reach of disturbance—or, that he can repose in him, as one friend reposes in another—or, that any liberal and generous understanding can be established betwixt them—the one party rejoicing over the other to do him good—the other finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of a gratitude, by which it is awakened to the charms of a new moral existence. Salvation by grace—salvation by free grace—salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God—salvation on such a footing is not more indispensable to the deliverance of our persons from the hand of justice, than it is to the deliverance of our hearts from the chill and the weight of ungodliness. Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and you raise a topic of distrust between man and God. You take away from the power of the Gospel to melt and to conciliate. For this purpose, the freer it is, the better it is. That very peculiarity which so many dread as the germ of antinomianism, is, in fact, the germ of a new spirit, and a new inclination against it. Along with the light of a free Gos-

pel, does there enter the love of the Gospel, which, in proportion as you impair the freeness, you are sure to chase away. And never does the sinner find within himself so mighty a moral transformation, as when under the belief that he is saved by grace, he feels constrained thereby to offer his heart a devoted thing, and to deny ungodliness.

To do any work in the best manner, you would make use of the fittest tools for it. And we trust, that what has been said may serve in some degree, for the practical guidance of those who would like to reach the great moral achievement of our text—but feel that the tendencies and desires of Nature are too strong for them. We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God—and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our most holy faith. That denial of the world which is not possible to him that dissents from the Gospel testimony, is possible, even as all things are possible to him that believeth. To try this without faith, is to work without the right tool or the right instrument. But faith worketh by love; and the way of expelling from the heart

the love which transgresseth the law, is to admit into its receptacles the love which fulfilleth the law.

Conceive a man to be standing on the margin of this green world; and that, when he looked towards it, he saw abundance smiling upon every field, and all the blessings which earth can afford, scattered in profusion throughout every family, and the light of the sun sweetly resting upon all the pleasant habitations, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society—conceive this to be the general character of the scene upon one side of his contemplation; and that on the other, beyond the verge of the goodly planet on which he was situated, he could descry nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it. Would he leave its peopled dwelling places, and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of nonentity? If space offered him nothing but a wilderness, would he for it abandon the homebred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exerted such a power of urgency to detain

him? Would not he cling to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society?—and shrinking away from the desolation that was beyond it, would not he be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and to take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it?

But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blest had floated by; and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories, and its sounds of sweeter melody; and he clearly saw, that there, a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heart-felt joy spread itself among all the families; and he could discern there, a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all. —Could he further see, that pain and mortality were there unknown; and above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not, that what was before the wilderness, would become the land of invitation; and that now the world would be the wilderness? What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by

space teeming with beatific scenes, and beatific society. And let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visibly around us, still if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith, or through the channel of his senses—then, without violence done to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die unto the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.

SERMON III.

THE SURE WARRANT OF A BELIEVER'S HOPE.

ROMANS V. 10.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

ST. PAUL, who, by the way, is by far the most argumentative of all the Apostles—and who, from being the most successful of them all, proves that argument is both a legitimate and a powerful weapon in the work of making Christians, sometimes undertakes to reason upon one set of premises, and then to demonstrate how much more valid and irresistible is the conclusion which he tries to establish, when he is in actual possession of another and more favourable set of premises. In this way a great additional strength is made to accrue to his argu-

ment—and the how much more with which he finishes, causes it to come with greater power and assurance upon his readers—and it is this which gives him the advantage of what is well known, both in law and in logic, under the phrase of *argumentum a fortiore*, or, an argument which affirms a thing to be true in adverse and unpromising circumstances, and therefore far more worthy of being held true in likelier circumstances. It is quite a familiar mode of reasoning in common discourse. If a neighbour be bound to sympathize with the distresses of an unfortunate family, how much more, when that neighbour is a relative? If I obtained an offer of friendship from a man in difficulties, how much more may I count upon it should he now be translated into a state of sufficiency and ease? If, in the very heat of our quarrel, and under the discouragement of all my provoking insolence towards him, my enemy forbear the vengeance which he had the power to inflict, how much more, should the quarrel be made up, and I have been long in terms of reconciliation with him, may I feel myself secure from the effects of his indignation? Such also is the argument of my text. There is one state of matters in which God sets forth a demonstration of friendship to the world, and this is compared with the

present and actual state of matters, more favourable than the former, and from which, therefore, the friendship of God may be still more surely inferred, and still more firmly confided in. But it will be further seen, that in this short sentence of the Apostle, there lies a compound argument which admits of being separated into distinct parts. There is a reference made to a two-fold state of matters, which by being resolved into its two particulars, brings out two accessions of strength to the conclusion of our Apostle, which are independent of each other. He, in fact, holds forth a double claim upon our understanding, and we propose to view successively the two particulars of which it is made up.

There is first then a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in our earth—and there is at the same time a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in heaven—and from each of these there may be educed an argument for strengthening the assurance of every Christian, in that salvation which the Gospel has made known to us.

Let us first look then to the two states upon earth—and this may be done either with a reference to this world's history, or it may be done with a reference to the personal history of every one man who is now a believer.

That point of time in the series of general history at which reconciliation was made, was when our Saviour said that it is finished, and gave up the ghost. God may be said to have then become reconciled to the world, in as far as he was ready to enter into agreement with all who drew nigh in the name of this great propitiation. Now think of the state of matters upon earth, previous to the time when reconciliation in this view was entered upon. Think of the strength of that moving principle in the bosom of the Deity, which so inclined him towards a world then lying in the depths of ungodliness—and from one end to another of it, lifting the cry of rebellion against him. There was no movement on the part of the world towards God—no returning sense of allegiance towards him from whom they had revolted so deeply—no abatement of that profligacy which so rioted at large over a wide scene of lawless, and thankless, and careless abandonment—no mitigation of that foul and audacious insolence by

which the throne of heaven was assailed; and a spectacle so full of offence to the unfallen was held forth, of a whole province in arms against the lawful Monarch of creation. Had the world thrown down its weapons of disobedience—had a contrite and relenting spirit gone previously forth among its generations—had the light which even then glimmered in the veriest wilds of Paganism, just up to the strength and degree of its influence, told aright on the moral sensibilities of the deluded and licentious worshippers—had they, whose conscience was a law unto themselves, just acted and followed on as they might under the guidance of its compunctious visitations—had there been any thing like the forthgoing of a general desire, however faint, towards that unknown Being, the sense and impression of whom were never wholly obliterated—then it might have been less decisive of God's will for reconciliation, that he gave way to these returning demonstrations on the part of his alienated creatures, and reared a pathway of communication by which sinners may draw nigh unto God. But for God to have done this very thing, when these sinners were persisting in the full spirit and determination of their unholy warfare—for him to have done so, when instead of any returning loyalty rising up to him like

the incense of a sweet-smelling savour, the exhalations of idolatry and vice blackened the whole canopy of heaven, and ascended in a smoke of abomination before him—for him to have done so at the very time that all flesh had corrupted its ways, and when either with or without the law of revelation, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—in these circumstances of deep and unalleviated provocation, and when God may have eased him of his adversaries, by sweeping the whole of this moral nuisance away from the face of the universe which it deformed—for such a time to have been a time of love, when majesty seemed to call for some solemn vindication, but mercy could not let us go—surely, if through such a barrier between God and the guilty, he, in the longings of his desire after them, forced a path-way of reconciliation, he never will turn himself away from any, who cheered forward by his own entreaties, are walking upon that path. But if, when enemies, he himself found out an approach by which he might beckon them to enter into peace with him, how much more when they are so approaching, will he meet them with the light of his countenance, and bless them with the joys of his salvation.

But this argument may be looked to in another way. Instead of fixing our regards upon that point in the general history of the world, when the avenue was struck out between our species and their offended Lawgiver; and through the rent vail of a Saviour's flesh, a free and consecrated way of access was opened for the guiltiest of them all—let a believer in Christ fix his regards upon that passage in his own personal history at which he was drawn in his desires and in his confidence to this great Mediator, and entered upon the grace wherein he now stands, and gave up his evil heart of unbelief, and made his transition out of darkness to the marvellous light of the Gospel. Let him compare what he was, when an alien from God, through wicked works of his own, with what he is when a humble but confiding expectant of God's mercy through the righteousness of another. Who translated him into the condition which he now occupies? Who put into his heart the faith of the Gospel? Who awakened him from the dormancy and unconcern of Nature? Who stirred up that restless but salutary alarm which at length issued in the secure feeling of reconciliation? There was a time of his past life when the whole doctrine of salvation was an offence to him, when its preaching was foolishness to

his ears; when its phraseology tired and disgusted him; when, in light and lawless companionship, he put the warnings of religious counsel, and the urgency of menacing sermons away from his bosom—a time when the world was his all, and when he was wholly given over to the idolatry of its pursuits, and pleasures, and projects of aggrandisement—a time when his heart was unvisited with any permanent seriousness about God, of whom his conscience sometimes reminded him, but whom he soon dismissed from his earnest contemplation—a time when he may have occasionally heard of a judgment, but without one practical movement of his soul towards the task of preparation—a time when the overtures of peace met him on his way, but which he, in the impetuous prosecution of his own objects, utterly disregarded—a time when death plied him with its ever-recurring mementoes, but which he, overlooking the short and summary arithmetic of the few little years that lay between him and the last messenger, placed so far on the back ground of his anticipation, that this earth, this passing and perishable earth, formed the scene of all his solicitudes. Is there none here present who remembers such a time of his bygone history, and with such a character of alienation from God and from his Christ, as I

have now given to it? And who, I ask, recalled him from this alienation? By whose guidance was he conducted to that demonstration either of the press or of the pulpit, which awakened him? Who sent that afflictive visitation to his door, which weaned his spirit from the world, and wooed it to the deathless friendships, and the ever-during felicities of heaven? Who made known to him the extent of his guilt, with the overpassing extent of the redemption that is provided for it? It was not he himself who originated the process of his own salvation. God may have abandoned him to his own courses; and said of him as he has done of many others, "I will let him alone, since he will have it so;" and given him up to that judicial blindness, under which the vast majority of the world are now sleeping in profoundest lethargy; and withheld altogether that light of the spirit which he had done so much to extinguish. But if instead of all this, God kept by him in the midst of his thankless provocations—and while he was yet a regardless enemy, made his designs of grace to bear upon him—and throughout all the mazes of his chequered history, conducted him to the knowledge of himself as a reconciling God—and so softened his heart with family bereavements, or so tore it from all its worldly dependencies

by the disasters of business, or so shook it with frightful agitation by the terrors of the law, or so shone upon it with the light of his free Spirit, as made it glad to escape from the treachery of nature's joys and nature's promises, into a relying faith on the offers and assurances of the Gospel—why, just let him think of the time when God did so much for him—and then think of the impossibility that God will recede from him now, or that he will cease from the prosecution of that work in circumstances of earnest and desirous concurrence on the part of the believer, which he himself begun in the circumstances either of his torpid unconcern, or of his active and haughty defiance. The God who moved towards him in his days of forgetfulness, will not move away from him in his days of hourly and habitual remembrance—and he who intercepted him in his career of rebellion, will not withdraw from him in his career of new obedience—and he who first knocked at the door of his conscience, and that too in a prayerless, and thankless, and regardless season of his history, will not, now that he prays in the name of Christ, and now that his heart is set upon salvation, and now that the doctrine of grace forms all his joy and all his dependence; he who thus found him out a distant and exiled rebel, will not abandon him

now that his fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son. It is thus, that the believer may shield his misgiving heart from all its despondencies. It is thus, that the argument of the text goes to fortify his faith, and to perfect that which is lacking in it. It is thus that the how much more of the Apostle should cause him to abound more and more in the peace and the joy of believing—and should encourage every man who has laid hold on the hope set before us, to steady and confirm his hold still more tenaciously than before, so as to keep it fast and sure even unto the end.

With a man who knows himself to be a believer, this argument is quite irresistible, and it will go to establish his faith, and to strengthen it, and to settle it, and to make it perfect. But it is possible for a man really to believe, and yet to be in ignorance for a time whether he does so or not—and it is possible for a man to be in earnest about his soul, and yet not to have received that truth which is unto salvation—and it is possible for him to be actuated by a strong general desire to be right, and yet to be walking among the elements of uncertainty—and it is possible for him to be looking to that quarter whence the truths of the Gospel are offered

to his contemplation, and yet not to have attained the distinct or satisfying perception of them—thoroughly engaged in the prosecution of his peace with God, determinedly bent on this object as the highest interest he can possibly aspire after, labouring after a settlement, and, under all the agonies of a fierce internal war, seeking, and toiling, and praying for his deliverance. It is at the point of time when faith enters the heart, that reconciliation is entered upon—nor can we say of this man, that he is yet a believer, or, that he has passed from the condition of an enemy to that of a friend. And yet upon him the argument of the text should not be without its efficacy. It is such an argument as may be employed not merely to confirm the faith which already exists, but to help on to its formation that faith which is struggling for an establishment in the heart of an inquirer. It falls, no doubt, with fullest and most satisfying light upon the heart of a conscious believer—and yet may it be addressed, and with pertinency too, to men under their first and earliest visitations of seriousness. For give me an acquaintance of whom I know nothing more than that his face is towards Zion—give me one arrested by a sense of guilt and of danger, and merely groping his way to a place of enlarge-

67903

ment—give me a soul not in peace, but in perplexity, and in the midst of all those initial difficulties which beset the awakened sinner, ere Christ shall give him light—give me a labouring and heavy laden sinner, haunted by the reflection, as if by an arrow sticking fast, that the mighty question of his eternity is yet unresolved. There are many I fear amongst you to whom this tremendous uncertainty gives no concern—but give me one who has newly taken it up, and who, in the minglings of doubt and despondency, has not yet found his way to any consolation—and even with him may it be found, that the same reason which strengthens the hope of an advanced Christian, may well inspire the hope of him who has still his Christianity to find, and thus cast a cheering and a comforting influence on the very infancy of his progress. For if it was in behalf of a careless world that the costly apparatus of redemption was reared—if it was in the full front and audacity of their most determined rebellion, that God laid the plan of reconciliation—if it was for the sake of men sunk in the very depths of ungodliness, that he constructed his overtures of peace, and sent forth his Son with them amongst our loathsome and polluted dwelling-places—if to get at his strayed children, he had thus to find his way

through all those elements of impiety and ungodliness, which are most abhorrent to the sanctity of his nature, think you, my brethren, think you that the God who made such an advancing movement towards the men whose faces were utterly away from him—is this a God who will turn his own face away from the man who is moving towards God, and earnestly seeking after him, if haply he may find him?

This argument obtains great additional force, when we look to the state of matters in heaven at the time that we upon earth were enemies, and compare it with the state of matters in heaven, now that we are actually reconciled, or are beginning to entertain the offers of reconciliation. Before the work of our redemption, Jesus Christ was in primeval glory—and though a place of mystery to us, it was a place of secure and ineffable enjoyment—insomuch, that the fondest prayer he could utter in the depths of his humiliation, was to be taken back again to the Ancient of days, and there to be restored to the glory which he had with him before the world was. It was from the heights of celestial security and blessedness that he looked with an eye of pity on our sinful habitation—it was from a scene where beings of a holy nature surround-

ed him, and the full homage of the Divinity was rendered to him, and in the ecstacies of his fellowship with God the Father, all was peace, and purity, and excellence—it was from this that he took his voluntary departure, and went out on his errand to seek and to save us. And it was not the parade of an unreal suffering that he had to encounter; but a deep and a dreadful endurance—it was not a triumphant promenade through this lower world, made easy over all its obstacles by the energies of his Godhead; but a conflict of toil and of strenuousness—it was not an egress from heaven on a journey brightened through all its stages by the hope of a smooth and gentle return; but it was such an exile from heaven as made his ascent and his readmittance there the fruit of a hard won victory. We have nothing but the facts of revelation to guide or to inform us, and yet from these we most assuredly gather, that the Saviour, in stepping down from the elevation of his past eternity, incurred a substantial degradation—that when he wrapped himself in the humanity of our nature, he put on the whole of its infirmities and its sorrows—that for the joy which he renounced, he became acquainted with grief, and a grief too commensurate to the whole burden of our world's atonement—that the hidings

of his Father's countenance were terrifying to his soul—and when the offended justice of the Godhead was laid upon his person, it required the whole strength of the Godhead to sustain it. What mean the agonies of the garden? What mean the bitter cries and complainings of abandonment upon the cross? What meaneth the prayer that the cup might pass away from him, and the struggle of a lofty resolution with the agonies of a mighty and unknown distress, and the evident symptoms of a great and toilsome achievement throughout the whole progress of this undertaking, and angels looking down from their eminencies, as on a field of contest, where a great Captain had to put forth the travailling of his strength, and to spoil principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly? Was there nothing in all this do you think, but the mockery of a humiliation that was never felt—the mockery of a pain that was never suffered—the mockery of a battle that was never fought? No, my brethren, be assured that there was, on that day, a real vindication of God's insulted majesty. On that day there was the real transference of an avenging hand, from the heads of the guilty to the head of the innocent. On that day one man died for the people, and there was an actual laying on of the iniquities of

us all. It was a war of strength and of suffering in highest possible aggravation, because the war of elements which were infinite. The wrath which millions should have borne, was all of it discharged. Nor do we estimate aright what we owe of love and obligation to the Saviour, till we believe, that the whole of that fury, which if poured out upon the world, would have served its guilty generations through eternity—that all of it was poured into the cup of expiation.

A more adequate sense of this might not only serve to awaken the gratitude which slumbers within us, and is dead—it might also, through the aid of the argument in my text, awaken and assure our confidence. If when we were enemies, Christ ventured on an enterprise so painful—if, when loathsome outcasts from the sacred territory of heaven, he left the abode of his Father, and exchanged love, and adoration, and congenial felicity among angels, for the hatred and persecution of men—if, when the agonies of the coming vengeance were still before him, and the dark and dreary vale of suffering had yet to be entered upon, and he had to pass under the inflictions of that sword which the Eternal God awakened against his Fellow, and he had still to give himself up to a death equivalent in

the amount of its soreness to the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings, which but for him believers would have borne—if, when all this had yet to be travelled through, he, nevertheless, in his compassionate longing for the souls of men, went forth upon the errand of winning them to himself,—let us just look to the state of matters in heaven then, and compare it with the state of matters now. Christ has there ascended on the wings of victory—and he is now sitting at God's right hand, amid all the purchased triumphs of his obedience—and the toil, and the conflict, and the agony, are now over—and from that throne of mediatorship to which he has been exalted, is it his present office to welcome the approaches of all who come, and to save to the uttermost all who put their trust in him. And is it possible, we would ask, my brethren, is it possible that he who died to atone, now that he lives, will not live to make intercession for us? Can the love for men which bore him through a mighty and a painful sacrifice, not be strong enough to carry him onwards in peace and in triumph to its final consummation? Will he now abandon that work which his own hands have so laboriously reared?—or leave the cause for which he has already sustained the weight of such an endurance, in the embryo and un-

finished state of an abortive undertaking? Will he cast away from him the spoils of that victory for which he bled; and how can it be imagined for a moment, but by such dark and misgiving hearts as ours, that he whose love for a thankless world carried him through the heat and the severity of a contest that is now ended, will ever, with the cold and forbidding glance of an altered countenance spurn an inquiring world away from him?

The death of a crucified Saviour, when beheld under such a view, is the firm stepping stone to confidence in a risen Saviour. You may learn from it that his desire and your salvation are most thoroughly at one. Of his good-will to have you into heaven, he has given the strongest pledge and demonstration, by consecrating, with his own blood, a way of access, through which sinners may draw nigh. And now, that as our forerunner, he is already there—now that he has gone up again to the place from which he arose —now that to the very place which he left to die, and that, that the barrier to its entrance from our world may be moved away, he has ascended alive and in glory, without another death to endure, for death has no more the dominion over him—will ever he do any thing to

close that entrance which it has cost him so much to open? Will he thus throw away the toil and the travail of his own soul, and reduce to impotency that apparatus of reconciliation which he himself has reared, and at an expense too, equal to the penance of many millions through eternity? What he died to begin, will he not now live to carry forward; and will not the love which could force a way through the grave to its accomplishments—now that it has reached the summit of triumph and of elevation which he at present occupies, burst forth and around the field of that mighty enterprise, which was begun in deepest suffering, and will end in full and finished glory?

This is a good argument in all the stages of a man's Christianity. Whether he has found, or is only seeking—whether he be in a state of faith, or in a state of inquiry—whether a believer like Paul and many of the disciples that he was addressing, or an earnest and convinced sinner groping the way of deliverance, and labouring to be at rest, there may be made to emanate from the present circumstances of our Saviour, and the position that he now occupies, an argument either to perpetuate the confidence where it is, or to inspire it where it is not. If, when an

enemy, I was reconciled, and that too by his death —if he laid down his life to remove an obstacle in the way of my salvation, how much more, now that he has taken it up, will he not accomplish that salvation? It is just fulfilling his own desire. It is just prospering forward the very cause that his heart is set upon. It is just following out the facilities which he himself has opened—and marching onward in glorious procession, to the consummation of those triumphs, for which he had to struggle his way through a season of difficulties that are now over. It is thus that the believer reasons himself into a steadier assurance than before—and peace may be made to flow through his heart like a mighty river—and resting on the foundation of Christ, he comes to feel himself in a sure and wealthy place—and the good-will of the Saviour rises into an undoubted axiom—so as to chase away all his distrust, and cause him to delight himself greatly in the riches of his present grace, and in the brightening certainty of his coming salvation.

And this view of the matter is not only fitted to heighten the confidence that is already formed—but also to originate the confidence that needs to be inspired. It places the herald of

salvation on a secure and lofty vantage ground. It seals and authenticates the offer with which he is intrusted—and with which he may go round among the guiltiest of this world's population. It enables him to say, that for guilt even in the season of its most proud and unrepentant defiance, did Christ give himself up unto the death—and that to guilt even in this state of hardihood, Christ in prosecution of his own work has commissioned him to go with the overtures of purchased mercy—and should the guilt which has stood its ground against the threatenings of power, feel softened and arrested by pity's preventing call, may the preacher of forgiveness affirm in his Master's name, that he, who for the chief of sinners, bowed himself down unto the sacrifice, will not now, that he has arisen a Prince and a Saviour, stamp a nullity upon that contest, the triumph of which is awaiting him; but the bitterness of which has passed away. He will not turn with indifference and distaste from that very fruit which he himself has fought for. But if for guilt in its full impenitency, he dyed his garments, and waded through the arena of contest and of blood—then should the most abandoned of her children begin a contrite movement towards him, it is not he who will either break the prop for which

he feels, or quench his infant aspiration. He will look to him as the travail of his own soul, and in him he will be satisfied.

We know not what the measure of the sinfulness is of any who now hear us. But we know, that however foul his depravity, and however deep the crimson dye of his manifold iniquities may be, the measure of the gospel warrant reaches even unto him. It was to make an inroad on the territory of Satan, and reclaim from it a kingdom unto himself, that Christ died—and I speak to the farthest off in guilt and alienation amongst you—take the overture of peace that is now brought to your door, and you will add to that kingdom which he came to establish, and take away from that kingdom which he came to destroy. The freeness of this Gospel has the honour of him who liveth and was dead for its guarantee. The security of the sinner and the glory of the Saviour, are at one. And with the spirit of a monarch who had to fight his way to the dominion which was rightfully his own, will he hail the returning allegiance of every rebel, as a new accession to his triumphs, as another trophy to the might and the glory of his great undertaking.

But, amid all this latitude of call and of invitation, let me press upon you that alternative character of the Gospel, to which I have often adverted. I have tried to make known to you, how its encouragements rise the one above the other to him who moves towards it. But it has its corresponding terrors and severities, which also rise the one above the other to him who moves away from it. If the transgressor will not be recalled by the invitation which I have now made known to him, he will be rivetted thereby into deeper and more hopeless condemnation. If the offer of peace be not entertained by him, then, in the very proportion of its largeness and generosity, will the provocation be of his insulting treatment in having rejected it. Out of the mouth of the Son of man there cometh a two-edged sword. There is pardon free as the light of heaven to all who will. There is wrath accumulated, and irretrievable wrath to all who will not. "Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way: when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed only are they who put their trust in him."

It is the most delusive of all calculations to put off the acceptance of the Gospel, because

of its freeness—and because it is free at all times—and because the present you think may be the time of your unconcern and liberty, and some distant future be the time of your return through that door which will still be open for you. The door of Christ's mediatorship is ever open, till death put its unchangeable seal upon your eternity. But the door of your own heart, if you are not receiving him, is shut at this moment, and every day is it fixing and fastening more closely—and long ere death summon you away, may it at length settle immoveably upon its hinges, and the voice of him who standeth without, and knocketh, may be unheard by the spiritual ear—and, therefore, you are not made to feel too much, though you feel as earnestly as if now or never was the alternative on which you were suspended. It is not enough, that the Word of God, compared to a hammer, be weighty and powerful. The material on which it works must be capable of an impression. It is not enough, that there be a free and forcible application. There must be a willing subject. You are unwilling now, and therefore it is that conversion does not follow. To-morrow the probability is, that you will be still more unwilling—and, therefore, though the application be the same, the conversion is still at a greater dis-

tance away from you. And thus, while the application continues the same, the subject hardens, and a good result is ever becoming more and more unlikely—and thus may it go on till you arrive upon the bed of your last sickness, at the confines of eternity—and what, I would ask, is the kind of willingness that comes upon you then? Willing to escape the pain of hell—this you are now, but yet not willing to be a Christian. Willing that the fire and your bodily sensations be kept a distance from each other—this you are now, for who of you at present, would thrust his hand among the flames? Willing that the frame of your animal sensibilities shall meet with nothing to wound or to torture it—this is willingness of which the lower animals, incapable of religion, are yet as capable as yourself. You will be as willing then for deliverance from material torments as you can be now—but there is a willingness which you want now, and which, in all likelihood will then be still more beyond the reach of your attainment. If the free Gospel do not meet with your willingness now to accept and to submit to it, neither may it then. And I know not, my brethren, what has been your experience in death-beds; but sure I am, that both among the agonies of mortal disease, and the terrors

of the malefactor's cell, Christ may be offered, and the offer be sadly and sullenly put away. The free proclamation is heard without one accompanying charm—and the man who refused to lay hold of it through life, finds, that in the impotency of his expiring grasp, he cannot apprehend it. And O, if you but knew how often the word of faith may fall from the minister, and the work of faith be left undone upon the dying man, never would you so postpone the purposes of seriousness, or look forward to the last week of your abode upon earth as to the convenient season for winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity.

If you look attentively to the text, you will find, that there is something more than a shade of difference between being reconciled and being saved. Reconciliation is spoken of as an event that has already happened—salvation as an event that is to come. The one event may lead to the other; but there is a real distinction between them. It is true, that the salvation instanced in the preceding verse, is salvation from wrath. But it is the wrath which is incurred by those who have sinned wilfully, after they had come to the knowledge of the truth—"when there remaineth no more sacrifice for

sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Jesus Christ will save us from this by saving us from sin. He who hath reconciled us by his death, will, by his life, accomplish for us this salvation. Reconciliation is not salvation. It is only the portal to it. Justification is not the end of Christ's coming—it is only the means to an ultimate attainment. By his death he pacified the lawgiver. By his life he purifies the sinner. The one work is finished. The other is not so, but is only going on unto perfection. And this is the secret of that unwillingness which I have already touched upon. There is a willingness that God would lift off from their persons the hand of an avenger. But there is not a willingness that Christ would lay upon their persons the hand of a sanctifier. The motive for him to apprehend them is to make them holy. But they care not to apprehend that for which they are apprehended. They see not that the use of the new dispensation, is for them to be restored to the image they have lost, and, for this purpose, to be purged from their old sins. This is the point on which they are in darkness—"and they love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil." They are at all times willing for the

reward without the service. But they are not willing for the reward and the service together. The willingness for the one they always have. But the willingness for both they never have. They have it not to day—and it is not the operation of time that will put it in them to-morrow. Nor will disease put it in. Nor will age put it in. Nor will the tokens of death put it in. Nor will the near and terrific view of eternity put it in. It may call out into a livelier sensation than before, a willingness for the reward. But it will neither inspire a taste nor a willingness for the service. A distaste for God and godliness, as it was the reigning and paramount principle of his life, so may it be the reigning and paramount principle of his death-bed. As it envenomed every breath which he drew, so may it envenom his last—and the spirit going forth to the God who gave it, with all the enmity that it ever had, God will deal with it as an enemy.

SERMON IV.

THE RESTLESSNESS OF HUMAN AMBITION.

PSALM XI. 1. and LV. 6.

"How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? —O that I had the wings of a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest."

To all those who are conversant in the scenery of external nature, it is evident, that an object to be seen to the greatest advantage must be placed at a certain distance from the eye of the observer. The poor man's hut, though all within be raggedness and disorder, and all around it be full of the most nauseous and disgusting spectacles—yet, if seen at a sufficient distance, may appear a sweet and interesting cottage. That field where the thistle grows, and the face of which is deformed by the wild exuberance of a rank and pernicious vegetation, may delight

the eye of a distant spectator by the loveliness of its verdure. That lake, whose waters are corrupted, and whose banks poison the air by their marshy and putrid exhalations, may charm the eye of an enthusiast, who views it from an adjoining eminence, and dwells with rapture on the quietness of its surface, and on the beauty of its outline—its sweet border fringed with the gayest colouring of Nature, and on which spring lavishes its finest ornaments. All is the effect of distance. It softens the harsh and disgusting features of every object. What is gross and ordinary, it can dress in the most romantic attractions. The country hamlet it can transform into a paradise of beauty, in spite of the abominations that are at every door, and the angry brawlings of the men and the women who occupy it. All that is loathsome or offensive, is softened down by the power of distance. You see the smoke rising in fantastic wreaths through the pure air, and the village spire peeping from among the thick verdure of the trees, which embosom it. The fancy of our sentimentalist swells with pleasure, and peace and piety supply their delightful associations to complete the harmony of the picture.

This principle may serve to explain a feeling

which some of you who now hear me may have experienced. On a fine day, when the sun threw its unclouded splendours over a whole neighbourhood, did you never form a wish that your place could be transferred to some distant and more beautiful part of the landscape? Did the idea never rise in your fancy, that the people who sport on yon sunny bank are happier than yourself—that you would like to be buried in that distant grove, and forget, for a while, in silence and in solitude, the distractions of the world—that you would like to repose by yon beautiful rivulet, and soothe every anxiety of your heart by the gentleness of its murmurs—that you would like to transport yourself to the distance of miles, and there enjoy the peace which resides in some sweet and sheltered concealment? In a word, was there no secret aspiration of the soul for another place than what you actually occupied? Instead of resting in the quiet enjoyment of your present situation, did not your wishes wander abroad and around you—and were not you ready to exclaim with the Psalmist in the text, "O that I had the wings of a dove; for I would fly to yonder mountain, and be at rest?"

But what is of most importance to be observed

is, that even when you have reached the mountain, rest is as far from you as ever. As you get nearer the wished-for spot, the fairy enchantments in which distance had arrayed it, gradually disappear; when you at last arrive at your object, the illusion is entirely dissipated; and you are grieved to find, that you have carried the same principle of restlessness and discontent along with you.

Now, what is true of a natural landscape, is also true of that *moral landscape*, which is presented to the eye of the mind when it contemplates human life, and casts a wide survey over the face of human society. The position which I myself occupy is seen and felt with all its disadvantages. Its vexations come home to my feelings with all the certainty of experience. I see it before mine eyes with a vision so near and intimate, as to admit of no colouring, and to preclude the exercise of fancy. It is only in those situations which are without me, where the principle of deception operates, and where the vacancies of an imperfect experience are filled up by the power of imagination, ever ready to summon the fairest forms of pure and unmingled enjoyment. It is all resolvable, as before, into the principle of distance. I am too

far removed to see the smaller features of the object which I contemplate. I overlook the operation of those minuter causes, which expose every situation of human life to the inroads of misery and disappointment. Mine eye can only take in the broader outlines of the object before me, and it consigns to fancy the task of filling them up with its finest colouring.

Am I unlearned? I feel the disgrace of ignorance, and sigh for the name and the distinctions of philosophy. Do I stand upon a literary eminence? I feel the vexations of rivalship, and could almost renounce the splendours of my dear-bought reputation for the peace and shelter which insignificance bestows. Am I poor? I riot in fancy upon the gratifications of luxury, and think how great I would be, if invested with all the consequence of wealth and of patronage. Am I rich? I sicken at the deceitful splendour which surrounds me, and am at times tempted to think, that I would have been happier far if born to a humbler station, I had been trained to the peace and innocence of poverty. Am I immersed in business? I repine at the fatigues of employment, and envy the lot of those who have every hour at their disposal, and can spend all their time in the sweet

relaxations of amusement and society. Am I exempted from the necessity of exertion? I feel the corroding anxieties of indolence, and attempt in vain to escape that weariness and disgust which useful and regular occupation can alone save me from. Am I single? I feel the dreariness of solitude, and my fancy warms at the conception of a dear and domestic circle. Am I embroiled in the cares of a family? I am tormented with the perverseness or ingratitude of those around me; and sigh in all the bitterness of repentance, over the rash and irrecoverable step by which I have renounced for ever the charms of independence.

This, in fact, is the grand principle of human ambition, and it serves to explain both its restlessness and its vanity. What is present is seen in all its minuteness, and we overlook not a single article in the train of little drawbacks, and difficulties, and disappointments. What is distant is seen under a broad and general aspect, and the illusions of fancy are substituted in those places which we cannot fill up with the details of actual observation. What is present fills me with disgust. What is distant allures me to enterprise. I sigh for an office, the business of which is more congenial to my temper.

I fix mine eye on some lofty eminence in the scale of preferment. I spurn at the condition which I now occupy, and I look around me and above me. The perpetual tendency is not to enjoy his actual position, but to get away from it—and not an individual amongst us who does not every day of his life join in the aspiration of the Psalmist, "O that I had the wings of a dove, that I may fly to yonder mountain, and be at rest."

But the truth is, that we never rest. The most regular and stationary being on the face of the earth, has something to look forward to, and something to aspire after. He must realize that sum to which he annexes the idea of a competency. He must add that piece of ground which he thinks necessary to complete the domain of which he is the proprietor. He must secure that office which confers so much honour and emolument upon the holder. Even after every effort of personal ambition is exhausted, he has friends and children to provide for. The care of those who are to come after him, lands him in a never-ending train of hopes, and wishes, and anxieties. O that I could gain the vote and the patronage of this honourable acquaintance—or, that I could secure the political in-

fluence of that great man who honours me with an occasional call, and addressed me the other day with a cordiality which was quite bewitching—or that my young friend could succeed in his competition for the lucrative vacancy to which I have been looking forward, for years, with all the eagerness which distance and uncertainty could inspire—or that we could fix the purposes of that capricious and unaccountable wanderer, who, of late indeed has been very particular in his attentions, and whose connection we acknowledge, in secret, would be an honour and an advantage to our family—or, at all events, let me heap wealth and aggrandisement on that son, who is to be the representative of my name, and is to perpetuate that dynasty which I have had the glory of establishing.

This restless ambition is not peculiar to any one class of society. A court only offers to one's notice a more exalted theatre for the play of rivalship and political enterprise. In the bosom of a cottage, you may witness the operation of the very same principle, only directed to objects of greater insignificance—and though a place for my girl, or an apprenticeship for my boy, be all that I aspire after, yet an enlightened observer of the human character will perceive

in it the same eagerness of competition, the same jealousy, the same malicious attempts to undermine the success of a more likely pretender, the same busy train of passions and anxieties which animate the exertions of him who struggles for precedency in the cabinet, and lifts his ambitious eye to the management of an empire.

This is the universal property of our nature. In the whole circle of your experience, did you ever see a man sit down to the full enjoyment of the present, without a hope or a wish unsatisfied? Did he carry in his mind no reference to futurity—no longing of the soul after some remote or inaccessible object—no day-dream which played its enchantments around him, and which even when accomplished, left him nothing more than the delirium of a momentary triumph? Did you never see him, after the bright illusions of novelty were over—when the present object had lost its charm, and the distant begun to practise its allurements—when some gay vision of futurity had hurried him on to a new enterprise, and in the fatigues of a restless ambition, he felt a bosom as oppressed with care, and a heart as anxious and dissatisfied as ever?

This is the true, though the curious, and I had almost said, the farcical picture of human life. Look into the heart which is the seat of feeling, and you there perceive a perpetual tendency to enjoyment, but not enjoyment itself—the cheerfulness of hope, but not the happiness of actual possession. The present is but an instant of time. The moment that you call it your own, it abandons you. It is not the actual sensation which occupies the mind. It is what is to come next. Man lives in futurity. The pleasurable feeling of the moment forms almost no part of his happiness. It is not the reality of to-day which interests his heart. It is the vision of to-morrow. It is the distant object on which fancy has thrown its deceitful splendour. When to-morrow comes, the animating hope is transformed into the dull and insipid reality. As the distant object draws near, it becomes cold and tasteless, and uninteresting. The only way in which the mind can support itself, is by recurring to some new anticipation. This may give buoyancy for a time—but it will share the fate of all its predecessors, and be the addition of another folly to the wretched train of disappointments that have gone before it.

What a curious object of contemplation to a superior being, who casts an eye over this lower world, and surveys the busy, restless, and unceasing operations of the people who swarm upon its surface. Let him select any one individual amongst us, and confine his attention to him as a specimen of the whole. Let him pursue him through the intricate variety of his movements, for he is never stationary; see him with his eye fixed upon some distant object, and struggling to arrive at it; see him pressing forward to some eminence which perpetually recedes away from him; see the inexplicable being, as he runs in full pursuit of some glittering bauble, and on the moment he reaches it, throws it behind him, and it is forgotten; see him unmindful of his past experience, and hurrying his footsteps to some new object with the same eagerness and rapidity as ever; compare the ecstacy of hope with the lifelessness of possession, and observe the whole history of his day to be made up of one fatiguing race of vanity, and restlessness, and disappointment;

> "And, like the glittering of an idiot's toy,
> Doth Fancy mock his vows."

To complete the unaccountable history, let us look to its termination. Man is irregular in

his movements, but this does not hinder the regularity of Nature. Time will not stand still to look at us. It moves at its own invariable pace. The winged moments fly in swift succession over us. The great luminaries which are suspended on high, perform their cycles in the heaven. The sun describes his circuit in the firmament, and the space of a few revolutions will bring every man among us to his destiny. The decree passes abroad against the poor child of infatuation. It meets him in the full career of hope and of enterprise. He sees the dark curtain of mortality falling upon the world, and upon all its interests. That busy, restless heart, so crowded with its plans, and feelings, and anticipations forgets to play, and all its fluttering anxieties are hushed for ever.

Where then is that resting place which the Psalmist aspired after? What are we to mean by that mountain, that wilderness, to which he prayed that the wings of a dove may convey him, afar from the noise and distractions of the world, and hasten his escape from the windy storm, and the tempest? Is there no object, in the whole round of human enjoyment, which can give rest to the agitated spirit of man? Will he not sit down in the fulness of con-

tentment, after he has reached it, and bid a final adieu to the cares and fatigues of ambition? Is this longing of the mind a principle of his nature, which no gratification can extinguish? Must it condemn him to perpetual agitation, and to the wild impulses of an ambition which is never satisfied?

We allow that exercise is the health of the mind. It is better to engage in a trifling pursuit, if innocent, than to watch the melancholy progress of time, and drag out a weary existence in all the languor of a consuming indolence. But nobody will deny that it is better still, if the pursuit in which we are engaged be not a trifling one—if it conducts to some lasting gratification—if it leads to some object, the possession of which confers more happiness than the mere prospect—if the mere pleasure of the chase is not the only recompense—but where, in addition to this, we secure some reward proportioned to the fatigue of the exercise, and that justifies the eagerness with which we embarked in it. So long as the exercise is innocent, better do something than be idle: but better still, when the something we do, leads to a valuable and important termination. Any thing rather than the ignoble condition of that mind which

feels the burden of itself—and which knows not how to dispose of the weary hours that hang so oppressively upon it. But there is certainly a ground of preference in the objects which invite us to exertion—and better far to fix upon that object which leaves happiness and satisfaction behind it, than dissipate your vigour in a pursuit which terminates in nothing—and where the mere pleasure of occupation is the only circumstance to recommend it. When we talk of the vanity of ambition, we do not propose to extinguish the principles of our nature, but to give them a more useful and exalted direction. A state of hope and of activity is the element of man—and all that we propose, is to withdraw his hopes from the deceitful objects of fancy, and to engage his activity in the pursuit of real and permanent enjoyments.

Man must have an object to look forward to. Without this incitement the mind languishes. It is thrown out of its element, and, in this unnatural suspension of its powers, it feels a dreariness, and a discomfort, far more unsufferable than it ever experienced from the visitations of a real or positive calamity. If such an object does not offer, he will create one for himself. The mere possession of wealth, and of all its

enjoyments, will not satisfy him. Possession carries along with it the dulness of certainty, and to escape from this dulness, he will transform it into an uncertainty—he will embark it in a hazardous speculation, or he will stake it at the gaming-table; and from no other principle than that he may exchange the lifelessness of possession, for the animating sensations of hope and of enterprise. It is a paradox in the moral constitution of man; but the experience of every day confirms it—that man follows what he knows to be a delusion, with as much eagerness as if he were assured of its reality. Put the question to him, and he will tell you, that if you were to lay before him all the profits which his fancy anticipates, he would long as much as ever for some new speculation; or, in other words, be as much dissatisfied as ever with the position which he actually occupies—and yet, with his eye perfectly open to this circumstance, will he embark every power of his mind in the chase of what he knows to be a mockery and a phantom.

Now, to find fault with man for the pleasure which he derives from the mere excitement of a distant object, would be to find fault with the constitution of his nature. It is not the general

principle of his activity which I condemn. It is the direction of that activity to a useless and unprofitable object. The mere happiness of the pursuit does not supersede the choice of the object. Even though you were to keep religion out of sight altogether, and bring the conduct of man to the test of worldly principles, you still presuppose a ground of preference in the object. Why is the part of the sober and industrious tradesman preferred to that of the dissipated gambler? Both feel the delights of a mind fully occupied with something to excite and to animate. But the exertions of the one lead to the safe enjoyment of a competency. The exertions of the other lead to an object which, at best, is precarious, and often land you in the horrors of poverty and disgrace. The mere pleasure of exertion is not enough to justify every kind of it: you must look forward to the object and the termination—and it is the judicious choice of the object which, even in the estimation of worldly wisdom, forms the great point of distinction betwixt prudence and folly. Now, all that I ask of you, is to extend the application of the same principle to a life of religion. Compare the wisdom of the children of light, with the wisdom of a blind and worldly generation—the prudence of the Christian who

labours for immortality, with the prudence of him who labours for the objects of a vain and perishable ambition. Contrast the littleness of time, with the greatness of eternity—the restless and unsatisfying pleasures of the world, with the enjoyments of heaven so pure, so substantial, so unfading—and tell me which plays the higher game—he, all whose anxiety is frittered away on the pursuits of a scene that is ever shifting, and ever transitory; or he, who contemplates the life of man in all its magnitude; who acts upon the wide and comprehensive survey of its interests, and takes into his estimate the mighty roll of innumerable ages.

There is no resting-place to be found on this side of time. It is the doctrine of the Bible, and all experience loudly proclaims it. I do not ask you to listen to the complaints of the poor, or the murmurs of the disappointed. Take your lesson from the veriest favourite of fortune. See him placed in a prouder eminence than he ever aspired after. See him arrayed in brighter colours than ever dazzled his early imagination. See him surrounded with all the homage that fame and flattery can bestow—and after you have suffered this parading exterior to practise its deceitfulness upon you, enter into his soli-

tude—mark his busy, restless, dissatisfied eye, as it wanders uncertain on every object—enter into his mind, and tell me if repose or enjoyment be there; see him the poor victim of chagrin and disquietude—mark his heart as it nauseates the splendour which encompasses him—and tell me, if you have not learned, in the truest and most affecting characters, that even in the full tide of a triumphant ambition, "man labours for the meat which perisheth, and for the food which satisfieth not."

What meaneth this restlessness of our nature? What meaneth this unceasing activity which longs for exercise and employment, even after every object is gained, which first roused it to enterprise? What mean those unmeasurable longings, which no gratification can extinguish, and which still continue to agitate the heart of man, even in the fulness of plenty and of enjoyment. If they mean any thing at all, they mean, that all which this world can offer, is not enough to fill up his capacity for happiness—that time is too small for him, and he is born for something beyond it—that the scene of his earthly existence is too limited, and he is formed to expatiate in a wider and a grander theatre—that a nobler destiny is reserved for him—and

that to accomplish the purpose of his being, he must soar above the littleness of the world, and aim at a loftier prize.

It forms the peculiar honour and excellence of religion, that it accommodates to this property of our nature—that it holds out a prize suited to our high calling—that there is a grandeur in its objects, which can fill and surpass the imagination—that it dignifies the present scene by connecting it with eternity—that it reveals to the eye of faith the glories of an unperishable world—and how, from the high eminencies of heaven, a cloud of witnesses are looking down upon earth, not as a scene for the petty anxieties of time, but as a splendid theatre for the ambition of immortal spirits.

SERMON V.

THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF VISIBLE THINGS.

2 CORINTHIANS IV. 18.

"The things which are seen are temporal."

THE assertion that the things which are seen are temporal, holds true in the absolute and universal sense of it. They had a beginning, and they will have an end. Should we go upwards through the stream of ages that are past, we come to a time when they were not. Should we go onward through the stream of ages that are before us, we come to a time when they will be no more. It is indeed a most mysterious flight which the imagination ventures upon, when it goes back to the eternity that is behind us—when it mounts its ascending way through the millions and the millions of years that are already gone through, and stop where it may, it finds the line of its

march always lengthening beyond it, and losing itself in the obscurity of as far removed a distance as ever. It soon reaches the commencement of visible things, or that point in its progress when God made the heavens and the earth. They had a beginning, but God had none; and what a wonderful field for the fancy to expatiate on, when we get above the era of created worlds, and think of that period when, in respect of all that is visible, the immensity around us was one vast and unpeopled solitude. But God was there in his dwelling place, for it is said of him, that he inhabits eternity; and the Son of God was there, for we read of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The mind cannot sustain itself under the burden of these lofty contemplations. It cannot lift the curtain which shrouds the past eternity of God. But it is good for the soul to be humbled under a sense of its incapacity. It is good to realize the impression which too often abandons us, that he made us, and not we ourselves. It is good to feel how all that is temporal lies in passive and prostrate subordination before the will of the uncreated God. It is good to know how little a portion it is that we see of him and of his mysterious ways. It is good to lie at the feet of his awful and unknown majesty

-and while secret things belong to him, it is good to bring with us all the helplessness and docility of children to those revealed lessons which belong to us and to our children.

But this is not the sense in which the temporal nature of visible things is taken up by the Apostle. It is not that there is a time past in which they did not exist—but that there is a time to come in which they will exist no more. He calls them temporal, because the time and the duration of their existence will have an end. His eye is full upon futurity. It is the passing away of visible things in the time that is to come, and the ever during nature of invisible things through the eternity that is to come, which the Apostle is contemplating. Now, on this one point we say nothing about the positive annihilation of the matter of visible things. There is reason for believing, that some of the matter of our present bodies may exist in those more glorified and transformed bodies which we are afterwards to occupy. And for any thing we know, the matter of the present world, and of the present system may exist in those new heavens and that new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. There may be a transfiguration of matter without a destruction of it—and, there-

fore it is, that when we assert with the Apostle in the text, how things seen are temporal, we shall not say more than that the substance of these things, if not consigned back again to the nothing from which they had emerged, will be employed in the formation of other things totally different—that the change will be so great, as that all old things may be said to have passed away, and all things to become new—that after the wreck of the last conflagration, the desolated scene will be repeopled with other objects; the righteous will live in another world, and the eye of the glorified body will open on another field of contemplation from that which is now visible around us.

Now, in this sense of the word temporal, the assertion of my text may be carried round to all that is visible. Even those objects which men are most apt to count upon as unperishable, because, without any sensible decay, they have stood the lapse of many ages, will not weather the lapse of eternity. This earth will be burnt up. The light of yonder sun will be extinguished. These stars will cease from their twinkling. The heavens will pass away as a scroll—and as to those solid and enormous masses which, like the firm world we tread upon, roll in mighty

circuit through the immensity around us, it seems the solemn language of revelation of one and all of them, that from the face of him who sitteth on the throne, the earth and the heavens will fly away, and there will be found no place for them.

Even apart from the Bible, the eye of observation can witness, in some of the hardest and firmest materials of the present system, the evidence of its approaching dissolution. What more striking, for example, than the natural changes which take place on the surface of the world, and which prove that the strongest of Nature's elements must, at last, yield to the operation of time and of decay—that yonder towering mountain, though propped by the rocky battlements which surround it, must at last sink under the power of corruption—that every year brings it nearer to its end—that at this moment, it is wasting silently away, and letting itself down from the lofty eminence which it now occupies—that the torrent which falls from its side never ceases to consume its substance, and to carry it off in the form of sediment to the ocean—that the frost which assails it in winter loosens the solid rock, detaches it in pieces from the main precipice, and makes it fall in

fragments to its base—that the power of the weather scales off the most flinty materials, and that the wind of heaven scatters them in dust over the surrounding country—that even though not anticipated by the sudden and awful convulsions of the day of God's wrath, nature contains within itself the rudiments of decay—that every hill must be levelled with the plains, and every plain be swept away by the constant operation of the rivers which run through it—and that, unless renewed by the hand of the Almighty, the earth on which we are now treading must disappear in the mighty roll of ages and of centuries. We cannot take our flight to other worlds, or have a near view of the changes to which they are liable. But surely if this world, which, with its mighty apparatus of continents and islands, looks so healthful and so firm after the wear of many centuries, is posting visibly to its end, we may be prepared to believe that the principles of destruction are also at work in other provinces of the visible creation—and that though of old God laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands, yet they shall perish; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shall he change them, and they shall be changed.

We should be out of place in all this style of observation, did we not follow it up with the sentiment of the Psalmist, "These shall perish, but thou shalt endure; for thou art the same, and thy years have no end." What a lofty conception does it give us of the majesty of God, when we think how he sits above, and presides in high authority over this mighty series of changes—when after sinking under our attempts to trace him through the eternity that is behind, we look on the present system of things, and are taught to believe that it is but a single step in the march of his grand administrations through the eternity that is before us—when we think of this goodly universe, summoned into being to serve some temporary evolution of his great and mysterious plan—when we think of the time when it shall be broken up, and out of its disordered fragments other scenes and other systems shall emerge—surely, when fatigued with the vastness of these contemplations, it well becomes us to do the homage of our reverence and wonder to the one Spirit which conceives and animates the whole, and to the one noble design which runs through all its fluctuations.

But there is another way in which the ob-

jects that are seen are temporal. The object may not merely be removed from us, but we may be removed from the object. The disappearance of this earth, and of these heavens from us, we look upon through the dimness of a far-placed futurity. It is an event, therefore, which may regale our imagination; which may lift our mind by its sublimity; which may disengage us in the calm hour of meditation from the littleness of life, and of its cares; and which may even throw a clearness and a solemnity over our intercourse with God. But such an event as this does not come home upon our hearts with the urgency of a personal interest. It does not carry along with it the excitement which lies in the nearness of an immediate concern. It does not fall with such vivacity upon our conceptions, as practically to tell on our pursuits, or any of our purposes. It may elevate and solemnize us, but this effect is perfectly consistent with its having as little influence on the walk of the living, and the moving, and the acting man, as a dream of poetry. The preacher may think that he has done great things with his eloquence—and the hearers may think that great things have been done upon them—for they felt a fine glow of emotion, when they heard of God sitting in the majesty of his high

counsels, over the progress and the destiny of created things. But the truth is, my brethren, that all this kindling of devotion which is felt upon the contemplation of his greatness, may exist in the same bosom, with an utter distaste for the holiness of his character; with an entire alienation of the heart and of the habits from the obedience of his law; and above all, with a most nauseous and invincible contempt for the spiritualities of that revelation, in which he has actually made known his will and his ways to us. The devotion of mere taste is one thing—the devotion of principle is another. And as surely as a man may weep over the elegant sufferings of poetry, yet add to the real sufferings of life by peevishness in his family, and insolence among his neighbours—so, surely may a man be wakened to rapture by the magnificence of God, while his life is deformed by its rebellions, and his heart rankles with all the foulness of idolatry against him.

Well, then, let us try the other way of bringing the temporal nature of visible things to bear upon your interests. It is true, that this earth, and these heavens, will at length disappear; but they may outlive our posterity for many generations. However, if they disappear not from us,

we most certainly shall disappear from them. They will soon cease to be any thing to you—and though the splendour and variety of all that is visible around us, should last for thousands of centuries, your eyes will soon be closed upon them. The time is coming when this goodly scene shall reach its positive consummation. But, in all likelihood, the time is coming much sooner, when you shall resign the breath of your nostrils, and bid a final adieu to every thing around you. Let this earth, and these heavens be as enduring as they may, to you they are fugitive as vanity. Time, with its mighty strides, will soon reach a future generation, and leave the present in death and in forgetfulness behind it. The grave will close upon every one of you, and that is the dark and the silent cavern where no voice is heard, and the light of the sun never enters.

But more than this. Though we live too short a time to see the great changes which are carrying on in the universe, we live long enough to see many of its changes—and such changes too as are best fitted to warn and to teach us; even the changes which take place in society, made up of human beings as frail and as fugitive as ourselves. Death moves us

away from many of those objects which are seen and temporal—but we live long enough to see many of these objects moved away from us—to see acquaintances falling every year—to see families broken up by the rough and unsparing hand of death—to see houses and neighbourhoods shifting their inhabitants—to see a new race, and a new generation—and, whether in church or in market, to see unceasing changes in the faces of the people who repair to them. We know well, that there is a poetic melancholy inspired by such a picture as this, which is altogether unfruitful—and that totally apart from religion, a man may give way to the luxury of tears, when he thinks how friends drop away from him—how every year brings along with it some sad addition to the registers of death—how the kind and hospitable mansion is left without a tenant—and how, when you knock at a neighbour's door, you find that he who welcomed you, and made you happy, is no longer there. O that we could impress by all this, a salutary direction on the fears and on the consciences of individuals—that we could give them a living impression of that coming day, when they shall severally share in the general wreck of the species—when each of you shall be one of the many whom the men of the next

generation may remember to have lived in yonder street, or laboured in yonder manufactory—when they shall speak of you, just as you speak of the men of the former generation—who, when they died, had a few tears dropped over their memory, and for a few years will still continue to be talked of. O could we succeed in giving you a real and living impression of all this; and then may we hope to carry the lesson of John the Baptist with energy to your fears, "Flee from the coming wrath." But there is something so very deceiving in the progress of time. Its progress is so gradual. To-day is so like yesterday that we are not sensible of its departure. We should make head against this delusion. We should turn to personal account every example of change or of mortality. When the clock strikes, it should remind you of the dying hour. When you hear the sound of the funeral bell, you should think, that in a little time it will perform for you the same office. When you wake in the morning, you should think that there has been the addition of another day to the life that is past, and the subtraction of another day from the remainder of your journey. When the shades of the evening fall around you, you should think of the steady and invariable progress of time—how the

sun moves and moves till it will see you out—and how it will continue to move after you die, and see out your children's children to the latest generations. Every thing around us should impress the mutability of human affairs. An acquaintance dies—you will soon follow him. A family moves from the neighbourhood—learn that the works of man are given to change. New families succeed—sit loose to the world, and withdraw your affections from its unstable and fluctuating interests. Time is rapid, though we observe not its rapidity. The days that are past appear like the twinkling of a vision. The days that are to come will soon have a period, and will appear to have performed their course with equal rapidity. We talk of our fathers and our grandfathers, who figured their day in the theatre of the world. In a little time, we will be the ancestors of a future age. Posterity will talk of us as of the men that are gone—and our remembrance will soon depart from the face of the country. When we attend the burial of an acquaintance, we see the bones of the men of other times—in a few years, our bodies will be mangled by the power of corruption, and be thrown up in loose and scattered fragments among the earth of the new made grave. When we wander among the tombstones of the church-

yard, we can scarcely follow the mutilated letters that compose the simple story of the inhabitant below. In a little time, and the tomb that covers us will moulder by the power of the seasons—and the letters will be eaten away—and the story that was to perpetuate our remembrance, will elude the gaze of some future inquirer.

We know that time is short, but none of us know how short. We know that it will not go beyond a certain limit of years; but none of us know how small the number of years, or months, or days may be. For death is at work upon all ages. The fever of a few days may hurry the likeliest of us all from this land of mortality. The cold of a few weeks may settle into some lingering but irrecoverable disease. In one instant the blood of him who has the promise of many years, may cease its circulation. Accident may assail us. A slight fall may precipitate us into eternity. An exposure to rain may lay us on the bed of our last sickness, from which we are never more to rise. A little spark may kindle the midnight conflagration, which lays a house and its inhabitants in ashes. A stroke of lightning may arrest the current of life in a twinkling. A gust of wind may over-

turn the vessel, and lay the unwary passenger in a watery grave. A thousand dangers beset us on the slippery path of this world; and no age is exempted from them—and from the infant that hangs on its mother's bosom, to the old man who sinks under the decrepitude of years, we see death in all its woeful and affecting varieties.

You may think it strange—but even still we fear, we may have done little in the way of sending a fruitful impression into your consciences. We are too well aware of the distinction between seriousness of feeling, and seriousness of principle, to think that upon the strength of any such moving representation as we are now indulging in, we shall be able to dissipate that confounded spell which chains you to the world, to reclaim your wandering affections, or to send you back to your week-day business more pure, and more heavenly. But sure we are you ought to be convinced, how that all which binds you so cleavingly to the dust is infatuation and vanity; that there is something most lamentably wrong in your being carried away by the delusions of time—and this is a conviction which should make you feel restless and dissatisfied. We are well aware, that it is not human eloquence,

or human illustration, that can accomplish a victory over the obstinate principles of human corruption—and therefore it is that we feel as if we did not advance aright through a single step of a sermon, unless we look for the influences of that mighty Spirit, who alone is able to enlighten and arrest you—and may employ even so humble an instrument as the voice of a fellow mortal, to send into your heart the inspiration of understanding.

I now shortly insist on the truth, that the things which are not seen are eternal. No man hath seen God at any time, and he is eternal. It is said of Christ, "whom having not seen, we love, and he is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever." It is said of the Spirit, that, like the wind of heaven, he eludes the observation, and no man can tell of him whence he cometh, or whither he goeth—and he is called the Eternal Spirit, through whom the Son offered himself up without spot unto God. We are quite aware, that the idea suggested by the eternal things which are spoken of in our text, is heaven, with all its circumstances of splendour and enjoyment. This is an object which, even on the principles of taste, we take a delight in contemplating: and

it is also an object set before us in the Scriptures, though with a very sparing and reserved hand. All the descriptions we have of heaven there, are general, very general. We read of the beauty of the heavenly crown, of the unfading nature of the heavenly inheritance, of the splendour of the heavenly city—and these have been seized upon by men of imagination, who, in the construction of their fancied paradise, have embellished it with every image of peace, and bliss, and loveliness; and, at all events, have thrown over it that most kindling of all conceptions, the magnificence of eternity. Now, such a picture as this has the certain effect of ministering delight to every glowing and susceptible imagination. And here lies the deep-laid delusion, which we have occasionally hinted at. A man listens, in the first instance, to a pathetic and high wrought narrative on the vanities of time—and it touches him even to the tenderness of tears. He looks, in the second instance, to the facinating perspective of another scene, rising in all the glories of immortality from the dark ruins of the tomb, and he feels within him all those ravishments of fancy, which any vision of united grandeur and loveliness would inspire. Take these two together, and you have a man weeping over the transient vanities of an ever-

shifting world, and mixing with all this softness, an elevation of thought and of prospect, as he looks through the vista of a futurity, losing itself in the mighty range of thousands and thousands of centuries. And at this point the delusion comes in, that here is a man who is all that religion would have him to be—a man weaned from the littleness of the paltry scene that is around him—soaring high above all the evanescence of things present, and things sensible—and transferring every affection of his soul to the durabilities of a pure and immortal region. It were better if this high state of occasional impressment on the matters of time and of eternity, had only the effect of imposing the falsehood on others, that the man who was so touched and so transported, had on that single account the temper of a candidate for heaven. But the falsehood takes possession of his own heart. The man is pleased with his emotions and his tears—and the interpretation he puts upon them is, that they come out of the fulness of a heart all alive to religion, and sensibly affected with its charms, and its seriousness, and its principle. Now, my brethren, I will venture to say, that there may be a world of all this kind of enthusiasm, with the very man who is not moving a single step towards that blessed eter-

nity, over which his fancy delights to expatiate. The moving representation of the preacher may be listened to as a pleasant song—and the entertained hearer return to all the inveterate habits of one of the children of this world. It is this, my brethren, which makes me fear that a power of deceitfulness may accompany the eloquence of the pulpit—that the wisdom of words may defeat the great object of a practical work upon the conscience—that a something short of a real business change in the heart, and in the principles of acting, may satisfy the man who listens, and admires, and resigns his every feeling to the magic of an impressive description—that, strangely compounded beings as we are, broken loose from God, and proving it by the habitual voidness of our hearts to a sense of his authority, and of his will; that blind to the realities of another world, and slaves to the wretched infatuation which makes us cleave with the full bent of our affections to the one by which we are visibly and immediately surrounded; that utterly unable, by nature, to live above the present scene, while its cares, and its interests are plying us every hour with their urgency; that the prey of evil passions which darken and distract the inner man, and throw us at a wider distance from the holy Being

who forbids the indulgence of them; and yet with all this weight of corruption about us, having minds that can seize the vastness of some great conception, and can therefore rejoice in the expanding loftiness of its own thoughts, as it dwells on the wonders of eternity; and having hearts that can move to the impulse of a tender consideration, and can, therefore, sadden into melancholy at the dark picture of death, and its unrelenting cruelties; and having fancies that can brighten to the cheerful colouring of some pleasing and hopeful representation, and can, therefore, be soothed and animated when some sketch is laid before it of a pious family emerging from a common sepulchre, and on the morning of their joyful resurrection, forgetting all the sorrows and separations of the dark world that has now rolled over them—O my brethren, we fear it, we greatly fear it, that while busied with topics such as these, many a hearer may weep, or be elevated, or take pleasure in the touching imagery that is made to play around him, while the dust of this perishable earth is all that his soul cleaves to—and its cheating vanities are all that his heart cares for, or his footsteps follow after.

The thing is not merely possible—but we see

in it a stamp of likelihood to all that experience tells us of the nature or the habitudes of man. Is there no such thing as his having a taste for the beauties of landscape, and, at the same time, turning with disgust from what he calls the methodism of peculiar Christianity? Might not he be an admirer of poetry, and, at the same time, nauseate with his whole heart, the doctrine and the language of the New Testament? Might not he have a fancy that can be regaled by some fair and well-formed vision of immortality—and, at the same time, have no practical hardihood whatever for the exercise of labouring in the prescribed way after the meat that endureth? Surely, surely, this is all very possible—and it is just as possible, and many we believe to be the instances we have of it in real life, when an eloquent description of heaven is exquisitely felt, and wakens in the bosom the raptures of the sincerest admiration, among those who feel an utter repugnancy to the heaven of the Bible—and are not moving a single inch through the narrowness of the path which leads to it.

SERMON VI.

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

ISAIAH XXIX. 9—12.

"Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is beçome unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."

WHAT is affirmed in these verses of a vision and prophecy, holds so strikingly true of God's general revelation to the world, that we deem the lesson contained in them to be not of partial, but permanent application—and we therefore proceed immediately, to the task of addressing this lesson, both to the learned and unlearned of the present day.

Let me, in the first place, dwell for a little on the complaints which are uttered by these two classes respecting the hidden and impenetrable character of the book of God's communication —and, in the second place, try to explain the nature of that sleep which is upon both, and in virtue of which both are alike in a state of practical blindness to the realities of the divine word—and, in the third place, raise a short application upon the whole argument.

I. There is a complaint uttered in these verses, first by the learned—and, secondly, by the unlearned—and we shall consider each of them in order.

1st, If a book be closed down by a material seal, then, till that seal be broken, there lies a material obstacle even in the way of him who is able to read the contents of it. And we have no doubt, that the possession of the art of reading would form the most visible and prominent distinction, between the learned and the unlearned in the days of Isaiah. But it no longer, at least in our country, forms the distinction between these two classes. Many a man who can barely read in these days, will still say, and say with truth, that he is not

learned. We must now therefore strike a higher mark of distinction—and, in reference to the Bible, such a mark can be specified. This book is often made the subject of a much higher exercise of scholarship than the mere reading of it. It may be read in its original languages. It may be the theme of many a laborious commentary. The light of contemporaneous history may be made to shine upon it, by the diligence of an exploring antiquarian. Those powers and habits of criticism, which are of so much avail towards the successful elucidation of the mind and meaning of other authors, may all be transferred to that volume of which God is the author—and what, after all this, it may be asked, is the seal or the obstacle which stands in the way of learned men of our present generation? How is it that any of them can now join in the complaint of their predecessors, in the days of Isaiah—and say, I cannot read this book because it is sealed? Or, is there any remaining hindrance still, in virtue of which, the critics, and the grammarians, and the accomplished theologians of our age, are unable to reach the real and effective understanding of the words of this prophecy?

Yes, my brethren, there is such an obstruc-

tion as you now inquire after—and it is wonderful to tell, how little the mere erudition of Scripture helps the real discernment of Scripture—how it may be said, of many of its most classical expounders, that though having eyes, they see not, and though having ears, they hear not—how doctrine, which if actually perceived and credited, would bring the realities of an eternal world to bear with effect upon their conduct, is, operatively speaking, just as weak as if they did not apprehend it even in its literal significancy—how the mere verbiage of the matter is all in which they appear to be conversant, without any actual hold of sight, or of conviction, on the substance of the matter—how dexterously they can play at logic with the terms of the communication, and how dimly and deficiently they apprehend the truths of it—how, after having exhausted the uttermost resources of scholarship on the attempt of forcing an entrance into the region of spiritual manifestation, they only find themselves labouring at a threshold of height and of difficulty, which they cannot scale—how, as if struck with blindness, like the men of Sodom, they weary themselves in vain to find the door—and after having reared their stately argumentations about the message of peace, they have no peace; about

the word of faith, they have no faith; about the doctrine of godliness, they have no godliness.

And it is not enough to say, that all this is not due to the want of discernment, but to the want of power—for the power lies in the truth—and the truth has only to be seen or believed, that it may have the power. The reflection may never have occurred to you—but it is not the less just on that account, how little of actual faith there is in the world. Many call it a mere want of impression. We call it a want of belief. Did we really believe, that there was a God in existence—did we really believe, that with the eye of a deeply interested judge, he was now scrutinizing all the propensities of our heart, and appreciating, with a view to future retribution, all the actions of our history—did we really believe, that sin was to him that hateful enemy with which he could keep no terms, and to which he could give no quarter; and that with every individual who had fallen into it, either in its guilt it must be expiated, and in its presence be finally done away, or the burden of a righteous vengeance would rest upon his person through eternity—did we really believe, that in these circumstances of deepest urgency,

a way of redemption has been devised, and that to all whom the tidings of it had reached the offer of deliverance, both from sin in its condemnation, and from sin in its power, was made, through the atoning blood and sanctifying spirit of a complete and omnipotent Saviour—did we really believe, that such an offer was lying at the door of every individual, and that his reliance upon its honesty constituted his acceptance of the offer—did we really believe, that throughout the fugitive period of our abode in this world, which was so soon to pass away, God in Christ was beseeching every one of us to reconciliation; and even now, as if at the place of breaking forth, was ready to begin that great renewing process, whereby there is made a commencement of holiness upon earth, and a consummation both of holiness and happiness in heaven—were these, which we all know to be the truths of Christianity, actually believed, the power of them upon our hearts would come, and come immediately, in the train of the perception of them by our understandings. If we remain unquickened by the utterance of them, it is because, in the true sense of the term, we remain unconvinced by them. The utterance of them may be heard as a very pleasant song—and the representation of them be viewed as a

very lovely picture—but the force of a felt and present reality is wanting to the whole demonstration. And all that reason can do is to adjust the steps of the demonstration—and all that eloquence can do, is to pour forth the utterance —and all that conception can do is to furnish its forms and its colouring to the picture. And after learning has thus lavished on the task the whole copiousness of its manifold ingredients, may we behold in the person of its proudest votary, that his Christianity to him is nothing better than an aerial phantom—that it is of as little operation in disposting sense, and nature, and ungodliness from his heart, as if it were but a nonentity, or a name—that to his eye, a visionary dimness hangs over the whole subject matter of the testimony of the Bible—and still untranslated into the life, and the substance, and the reality of these things, he may join in the complaint of the text, as if they lay sealed in deepest obscurity from his contemplation.

Make what you like in the way of argument, of so many simple conceptions, if the conceptions themselves do not carry the impress of vividness and reality along with them—the reasoning, of which they form the materials, may be altogether faultless—and the doctrine in

which it terminates, be held forth as altogether impregnable—yet will it share in all the obscurity which attaches to the primary elements of its formation—and while nature can manage the logical process which leads from the first simple ideas, to the ultimate and made-out conclusion, she cannot rid herself of the dimness in which, to her unrenewed eye, the former stand invested; and she must, therefore, leave the latter in equal dimness.

The learned just labour as helplessly under a want of an impression of the reality of this whole matter, as the unlearned—and if this be true of those among them, who, with learning and nothing more, have actually tried to decipher the meaning of God's communication—if this be true of many a priest and many a theologian, with whom Christianity is a science, and the study of the Bible is the labour and the business of their profession—what can we expect of those among the learned, who, in the pursuits of a secular philosophy, never enter into contact with the Bible, either in its doctrine or in its language, except when it is obtruded on them? Little do they know of our men of general literature, who have not observed the utter listlessness, if not the strong and active contempt

wherewith many of them hear the doctrine of the book of God's counsel uttered in the phraseology of that book—how, in truth, their secret impression of the whole matter is, that it is a piece of impenetrable mysticism—how in their eyes, there is a cast of obscurity over all the peculiarities of the Gospel—and if asked to give their attention thereto, they promptly repel the imposition under the feeling of a hopeless and insuperable darkness, which sits in obsolete characters over the entire face of the evangelical record. There may be bright and cheering examples to the contrary—of men in the highest of our literary walks, who, under a peculiar teaching, have learned what they never learned from all the lessons of the academy. But apart from this peculiar influence, be assured that learning is of little avail. The sacred page may wear as hieroglyphical an aspect to the lettered, as to the unlettered. It lies not with any of the powers or processes of ordinary education to dissipate that blindness, wherewith the god of this world hath blinded the mind of him who believes not. To make the wisdom of the New Testament his wisdom, and its spirit his spirit, and its language his best-loved and best-understood language, there must be a higher influence upon the mind, than what lies in human

art, or in human explanation. And till this is brought to pass, the doctrine of the atonement, and the doctrine of regeneration, and the doctrine of fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the doctrine of a believer's progressive holiness, under the moral and spiritual power of the truth as it is in Jesus, will, as to his own personal experience of its meaning, remain so many empty sounds, or so many deep and hidden mysteries—and just as effectually, as if the book were held together by an iron clasp, which he has not strength to unclose, may he say of the same book lying open and legible before him, that he cannot read it, because it is sealed.

2. So much for the complaint of the learned; and as for the complaint of the unlearned, it happily, in the literal sense of it, is not applicable to the great majority of our immediate countrymen, even in the very humblest walks of society. They can read the book. They can put together its letters, and pronounce its words, and make a daily exercise, if they choose, of one or more of its chapters. They have learning enough to carry them thus far—but not so far as to keep them from joining the unlearned of my text in the complaint that I am not

learned. They cannot for example estimate the criticism of many an expounder. They have not time to traverse the weary extent of many a ponderous and elaborate commentary. And those who have had much of Christian intercourse with the poor, must have remarked the effect which their sense of this inferiority has upon many an imagination—how it is felt by not a few of them, that they labour under a hopeless disadvantage, because they want the opportunities of a higher and a more artificial scholarship—and that if they could only get nearer to their teachers in respect of literary attainment, they would be nearer that wisdom which is unto salvation—and that though they can read the book in the plainest sense of the term, they cannot read it with any saving or salutary effect, just because, in the language of my text, they say, that they are not learned. And thus it is, that the man who has the literary accomplishments after which they sigh, meets with two distinct exhibitions to instruct and to humble him. The first is, when the poor look up to him as to one who, because he has the scholarship of Christianity, must have the saving knowledge of it also—when he intimately feels that the luminary of science may shine full upon him, while not

one ray to cheer or to enlighten, may pass into his heart from the luminary of the Gospel. The second is, when he observes, among the poor, those who live, and who rejoice under the power of a revelation, to which himself is a stranger—those who can discern a beauty and an evidence in the doctrine of Christ, which have never beamed with full radiance upon his own understanding—those whose feelings and whose experience move in a consonancy with the truths of the New Testament, which, in his own experience, he never felt—those whose daily path bespeaks the guidance of a wisdom which never yet shone upon his own way, and who are blest with a peace and a joy in believing, which have never found entrance into his own desolate bosom.

This gives us a new sight of the peculiarity which lies in the Bible—and by which it stands distinguished from all other compositions. There may remain a seal upon its meaning to him, who in the ordinary sense of the term, is learned, while the seal may be removed, and the meaning lie open as the light of day to him, who in the same sense is unlearned. It may come with all the force of a felt and perceived reality upon the

one, while the reality is not perceived, and therefore not felt by the other. To the man of literary accomplishment, the report of eternal things may reach no other influence than that of a sound upon his ear, or of a shadowy representation upon the eye of his fancy. To the unlettered workman, it may reach an influence as substantial and as practical, as the report of to-morrow's work, or to-morrow's wages. The latter may be led to shape his actual measures by the terms of the message of revelation. The former may lavish all the powers of science, and subtlety, and speculation upon the terms—and yet be as untouched in his personal habits by all the information which it lays before him, as if the message were untrue. It is not learning that has made the difference—for the veil may be upon the eyes of him who is rich in this acquirement, while it is taken away from him who, in respect of scholarship, is poor, and blind, and destitute. There is not a single weapon in the whole armoury of human learning, by which the proudest of its votaries can force his entrance into a region of spiritual manifestation. The wise and the prudent cannot, on the strength of any of their own peculiar resources, they cannot, with all their putting forth of desire and energy, attain unto those things which are

revealed unto babes. There is a barrier here against which all the machinery of the schools may be made to play without effect. And it would look as if argument might as soon remove the film from the eye of him who labours under a natural blindness, as dissipate that thick and impalpable obscurity which lies in the way of all spiritual discernment.

There are two immediate uses to which all this may be rendered subservient. The first, to rebuke the poor for an apology which they are sometimes heard to make, when convicted of blindness and ignorance in regard to the essential truths of Christianity. The second, while we do not sustain the apology, to encourage them with the assurance, that it is just as competent for them to be wise unto salvation, as for those in the higher and more cultivated walks of human society.

In pressing home the truths and overtures of Christianity on the poor, we often meet with the very answer of the text, "I am not learned." This answer is not copied by them from the text. But the text true, as the Bible strikingly and universally is, in all its descriptions of Nature, copied it from them. It is in truth a very

frequent conception among them, that had they the advantages of a higher scholarship than what they actually possess, they would be nearer the wisdom which is unto salvation. This ministers a kind of false security to their hearts, under the consciousness of a lack of knowledge, and that too of vital necessity to their immortal well-being. They think that there is an ignorance which necessity attaches to their condition—and that this should alleviate the burden of their condemnation, in that they know not God. They spend the day in drudgery—and think, that on this account, they must also spend it in a state of desolation, as to the whole light and learning of the Gospel. They are apt to look upon it, not as their fault, but as their doom, that they are strangers to the doctrine of peace and of righteousness—and often regard it to be as effectual a plea for justifying their ignorance of what is sacred, as of what is profane and secular, that they are not learned.

Now we refuse this apology altogether—and we should like to warn you in time, that it will stand you in no stead, nor be of any avail to you in the day of reckoning. The word of the Lord is in your hands, and you can at least read it. The candle of the Lord may be lighted

in your hearts, and you can at least pray for it. The Gospel is preached unto you as well as unto others—and you can, at least, attend to it. There will no incurable darkness settle upon your minds, unless you love the darkness. There will no fixed and obstinate unbelief adhere to your understandings, unless your deeds are evil. This will be your condemnation, if you are found to be without knowledge and without faith. But be assured, that all the aids and promises of Christianity are unto you as well as unto others—and if you grieve not the spirit by your wilful resistance—if you put not at a distance from you that Holy Ghost which is given to those who obey him, by your disobedience—if you despise not the grace of God by your daily and habitual neglect of those mercies, in the use of which alone, God undertakes to meet you with its influences—then be assured, that all the comforts of the Gospel, and all its high and heavenly anticipations, will descend more richly upon you, than upon the noble and wealthy of our land—and let your work through the week be what it may, there is not an hour of it which may not be sweetened by a blessing from above, which may not be regaled and heightened into rapture by the smile of a present Deity.

It is not merely to blame you, that we thus speak. It is further to encourage you, my friends—and that, by an assurance which we cast abroad among you, and that, too, with all the confidence of one who has the warrant of inspiration. The knowledge which is life everlasting, is just as accessible to the poor, as it is to the rich, who have time to prosecute, and money to purchase education. Whatever the barrier may be, which rises as a wall of separation between Nature and the Gospel, it is just as impenetrable to the learned as it is to the unlearned—and however the opening through that barrier is made, it is made as often, and oftener, for the purpose of sending a beam of spiritual light into the heart of the latter, than into the heart of the former. The Gospel may as effectually be preached unto the poor, as unto the wealthy. Simply grant to the one the capacity of reading, and the opportunity of hearing—and he is, at the very least, in as fair circumstances for becoming one of the children of light as the other. In respect of human science, there is a distinction between them. In respect of the Gospel, that distinction is utterly levelled and done away. Whatever the incapacity of Nature be for the lessons and the light of revelation, it is not learning commonly so

called, which resolves the incapacity; and until that peculiar instrument be actually put forth which can alone resolve it, the book of revelation may pass and repass among them—the one complaining, that he cannot read it, because he is not learned—the other equally complaining, that he cannot read it, because it is sealed.

II. Let us now proceed, in the second place, to explain a circumstance which stands associated in our text, with the incapacity both of learned and unlearned, to discover the meaning of God's communications—and that is the spirit of a deep sleep which had closed the eyes of the people, and buried in darkness and insensibility the prophets, and the rulers, and the seers, as well as the humblest and most ignorant of the land.

The connection between the one circumstance and the other is quite palpable. If a peasant and a philosopher, for example, were both literally asleep before me—and that so profoundly, as that no voice of mine could awaken them—then they are just in the same circumstances, with regard to any demonstration which I addressed to their understandings. The powers and acquirements of the latter would be of no avail to him in such a case. They are in a state

of dormancy, and that is just as firm an obstacle in the way of my reasoning, or of my information, as if they were in a state of non-existence. Neither would it at all help the conveyance of my meaning to their mind, that while dead to all perception of the argument which issued from my lips, or even of the sound which is its vehicle, the minds of both of them were most busily alive and active amongst the imagery of a dream—the one dreaming too, perhaps, in the style of some high intellectual pursuit—and the other dreaming in the style of some common and illiterate occupation. Such, indeed, may be the intoxication of their fancy, that in respect of mental delirium, they may be said to be drunken, but not with wine, and to stagger, but not with strong drink. Still, though in the language of the text, I should cry out, and cry, it may be just as difficult to awaken them to a sense of what I am saying, out of a reverie of imagination, as it is to awaken them out of a simple and unconscious slumber. Nay, the very engagement of their fancy with its ever-floating and aerial pictures, may have the effect of more strongly detaining the mind from the call which I vainly lift, for the purpose of arousing them. And as the visionary scenes, whether of bliss, or of anxiety, or of sadness,

or of eager pursuit, or of bright or of fearful anticipation, pass successively before them, the reality of my waking address may fall unheeded upon each—and though the one be learned, and the other be unlearned, it, in respect of their listening to me, and their understanding of me, totally annuls this difference between them, that their eyes are firmly closed, and a deep sleep is poured upon them both.

Such, it is possible to conceive, may be the profoundness of this lethargy, as to be unmoved by the most loud and terrifying intimations. I may lift this note of alarm, that a fire has broken out in the premises, and is on the eve of bursting into their apartment—and yet such may be the death-like sleep of both, that both may lie motionless and unconscious on the very confines of their approaching dissolution. Or, what would be more affecting still—both, in the airy chase of their own imagination, may be fully engrossed among the pictures and the agitations of a dream, and be inwardly laughing, or crying, or striving, or pursuing, or rejoicing—and that, while the flame is at their door, which in a few minutes is to seize upon and to destroy them.

When a man is asleep and dreaming, he is alive only to his own fancies, and dead to all the realities of the visible world around him. Awaken him, and he becomes intelligent and alive to these realities—but there may still be other realities to which he is not yet awakened. There may remain a torpor upon his faculties, in virtue of which he may have as little sense and as little feeling of certain near and impending realities, as the man who is wrapt in the insensibility of his midnight repose, has of earth and of all its concerns. The report of an angry God, and a coming eternity may as little disturb him, as the report of a conflagration in the premises, disturbs the sleeping inmate before he is awakened. It is not learned argument which works out, in the one case, the escape of him who is in danger. Could we only awaken him, we would need no argument. Neither is it learned argument which works out, in the other case, the escape of him who is in danger. It is the cry of "Awake, O sinner," lifted with power enough to arouse him out of his spiritual lethargies. It is the shaking of the soul out of those heavy slumbers, under which it is weighed down to deep and strong insensibility, about the awful urgencies of guilt, and danger, and death, by which it is encompassed. When the

house which covers a sleeping peasant and a sleeping philosopher, is in flames, it is not by a demonstration of philosophy that the one is awakened, and the other is left to perish in the ruin—and when both are awakened by the same call, it is not at the bidding of philosophy that the one hastens his escape, while the other lingers in the midst of destruction. They need only to be recovered to the use of senses which were alike suspended with both, that both may flee with equal promptitude from the besetting calamity. And the same of the coming wrath—the same of the consuming fire, that is now ready to burst on the head of the guilty, from the storehouse of treasured vengeance—the same of all the surrounding realities of God, and judgment, and eternity, which lie on every side of us. It is not philosophy which awakes him who has it, to a sense of these things. Neither is it the want of philosophy which keeps him who has it not, fast asleep among the vanities and day-dreams of a passing world. All the powers of philosophy operating upon all the materials of philosophy, will never dissolve the infatuation of him who is not yet aroused either from the slumbers, or from the visions of carnality. To effect this, there must be either the bestowment of a new sense, or the restoration

of an old sense, which has been extinguished. And be he learned or be he unlearned, such an awakening as this will tell alike upon both. The simple view of certain simple realities, to which the vast majority of the world are asleep, will put each of them into motion. And when his eyes are once opened by the force of such a demonstration, will he either flee from the coming wrath, or flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel, without the bidding or the voice of philosophy to speed his way.

And that the vast majority of the world are, in truth, asleep to all those realities which constitute the great materials of religion, may be abundantly proved by experience—and we cannot proceed far in the details of such a proof, without leading many an individual hearer to carry the topic home to his own experience. For this purpose, let us just compare the kind of feeling and perception, which we have about an event that may happen on this side of time, with the feeling and perception about an event, as nearly similar as possible, that will happen on the other side of time, and try how much it is that we are awake as to the former, and asleep as to the latter. Should we assuredly know, that in a few years we are to be translated into a

splendid affluence, or sunk into the most abject and deplorable poverty, how keen would be our anticipation, whether of hope or of fear, and why? because we are awake unto these things. We do assuredly know, that in a few years we pass that mysterious portal, which leads to bliss, or pain, or annihilation—and these are certainties which we do not keenly anticipate, and just because we are asleep unto these things. Should we behold a neighbour on the same path of enterprise with ourselves, suddenly arrested by the hand of bankruptcy, and be further told to our conviction, that the same fatality is sure to encounter all who are treading that path, we would retrace, or move aside, or do our uttermost to evade it—because all awake to the disgrace and wretchedness of bankruptcy. We every month behold such a neighbour arrested by the hand of death—nor can we escape the conviction, that sooner or later, he will cast his unfailing weapon at ourselves—and yet no one practical movement follows the conviction, because we are asleep to a sense of the mighty ruin which awaits us from unsparing and universal mortality. Should the house in which you live, be entered with violence by the executioners of a tyrant's will, and a brother, or a child, be hurried away to a perpetual dungeon—if made to

know, that it was because such a doom had been laid upon the whole family, and that sooner or later, its infliction was most surely in reserve for every successive member of it—would not you be looking out in constant terror, and live in constant insecurity, and prove how feelingly you were awake to a sense of the sufferings of an earthly imprisonment? But though death break in upon our dwelling, and lay a ruthless grasp on the dearest of its inmates, and leave the assurance behind him, that he will not cease his inroads on this devoted household, till he has swept it utterly away—all we know of the loneliness of the church-yard, and all we read of the unseen horrors of that eternity to which the impenitent and the unbeliever are carried by the ministers of the wrath of God, fail to disturb us out of the habit of living here, as if here we were to live for ever—and that, just because while awake to all the reality which lieth on this side of the grave, we are asleep to the consideration both of the grave itself, and of all the reality that lies beyond it.

Now, the question comes to be, how is this sleep dissipated? Not, we affirm, and all experience will go along with us, not by the power of natural argument—not by the demonstrations

of human learning, for these are just as powerless with him who understands them, as with him who makes his want of learning the pretence for putting them away—not by putting the old materials of thought into a new arrangement—not by setting such things as the eye of Nature can see, or its ear can hear, or its heart can conceive into a new light—not by working in the varied processes of combination, and abstraction, and reasoning, with such simple and elementary ideas as the mind of man can apprehend. The feelings and the suggestions of all our old senses put together, will not make out for us a practical impression of the matters of faith—and there must be a transition as great as that by which man awakens out of the sleep of nature, and so comes to see the realities of Nature which are around him—there must be a something equivalent to the communication of a new sense, ere a reality comes to be seen in those eternal things, where no reality was felt or seen, however much it may have been acknowledged before.

It is true, that along the course of our ordinary existence, we are awake to the concerns of our ordinary existence. But this is not a wakefulness which goes to disturb the profound-

ness of our insensibility, as to the concerns of a higher existence. We are in one sense awake, but in another most entirely, and, to all human appearance, most hopelessly and irrecoverably asleep. We are just in the same condition with a man who is dreaming, and so moves for the time in a pictured world of his own. He is not steeped in a more death-like indifference to the actual and the peopled world around him, than the man who is busy for the short and fleeting pilgrimage of his days upon earth, among its treacherous delusions, is shut in all his sensibilities, and all his thoughts, against the certainties of an immortal state. And the transition is not greater from the sleeping fancies of the night, to the waking certainties of our daily business, than is the transition from the day-dreams of a passing world, to those substantial considerations, which wield a presiding authority over the conduct of him who walketh not by the sight of that which is around him, but by the faith of the unseen things that are above him, and before him. To be thus translated in the habit of our mind, is beyond the power of the most busy and intense of its natural exercises. It needs the power of a new and simple manifestation—and as surely as the dreamer on his bed behoves to be awakened,

ere he be restored to a just sense of his earthly condition, and of his earthly circumstances, so surely must there be a distinct awakening made to pass on the dark, and torpid, and overborne faculties of us all, ere the matters of faith come to be clothed to our eye in the characters of certainty, and we be made truly to apprehend the bearing in which we stand to the God who is now looking over us, to the eternity which is now ready to absorb us.

This awakening calls for a peculiar and a preternatural application. We say preternatural, for such is the obstinacy of this sleep of nature, that no power within the compass of nature can put an end to it. It withstands all the demonstrations of arithmetic. Time moves on without disturbing it. The last messenger lifts many a note of preparation—but so deep is the lethargy of our text, that he is not heard. Every year do his approaching footsteps become more distinct and more audible—yet every year rivets the affections of the votary of sense more tenaciously than before, to the scene that is around him. One would think, that the fall of so many acquaintances on every side of him, might at length have reached an awakening conviction into his heart. One would think, that standing

alone, and in mournful survey amid the wreck of former associations, the spell might have been already broken, which so fastens him to a perishable world. O why were the tears he shed over his children's grave, not followed up by the deliverance of his soul from this sore infatuation? Why, as he hung over the dying bed of her with whom he had so oft taken counsel about the plans and the interests of life, did he not catch a glimpse of this world's vanity, and did not the light of truth break in upon his heart from the solemn and apprehended realities beyond it? But no. The enchantment, it would appear, is not so easily dissolved. The deep sleep which the Bible speaks of, is not so easily broken. The conscious infirmities of age cannot do it. The frequent and touching specimens of mortality around us, cannot do it. The rude entrance of death into our own houses, and the breaking up of our own families, cannot do it. The melting of our old society away from us, and the constant succession of new faces, and new families, in their place, cannot do it. The tolling of the funeral bell, which has rung so many of our companions across the confines of eternity, and in a few little years, will perform the same office for us, cannot do it. It often happens, in the visions of the night,

that some fancied spectacle of terror, or shriek of alarm, have frightened us out of our sleep, and our dream together. But the sleep of worldliness stands its ground against all this. We hear the moanings of many a death-bed—and we witness its looks of imploring anguish—and we watch the decay of life, as it glimmers onwards to its final extinction—and we hear the last breath—and we pause in the solemn stillness that follows it, till it is broken in upon by the bursting agony of the weeping attendants—and in one day more, we revisit the chamber of him, who, in white and shrouded stateliness, lies the effigy of what he was—and we lift the border that is upon the dead man's countenance, and there we gaze on that brow so cold, and those eyes so motionless—and, in two days more, we follow him to his sepulchre, and mingled with the earth, among which he is to be laid, we behold the skulls and the skeletons of those who have gone before him—and it is the distinct understanding of nature, that soon shall have every one of us to go through the same process of dying, and add our mouldering bodies to the mass of corruption that we have been contemplating. But mark the derangement of nature, and how soon again it falls to sleep among the delusions of a world, of the

vanity of which it has recently got so striking a demonstration. Look onwards but one single day more, and you behold every trace of this loud and warning voice dissipated to nothing. The man seemed, as if he had been actually awakened—but it was only the start and the stupid glare of a moment, after which he has lain him down again among the visions and the slumbers of a soul that is spiritually dead. He has not lost all sensibility any more than the man that is in a midnight trance, who is busied with the imaginations of a dream. But he has gone back again to the sensibilities of a world which he is so speedily to abandon—and in these he has sunk all the sensibilities of that everlasting world, on the confines of which he was treading but yesterday. All is forgotten amid the bargains, and the adventures, and the bustle, and the expectation of the scene that is immediately around him. Eternity is again shut out—and amid the dreaming illusions of a fleeting and fantastic day, does he cradle his infatuated soul into an utter unconcern about its coming torments, or its coming triumphs.

Yes! my brethren, we have heard the man of serious religion denounced as a visionary. But if that be a vision which is a short-lived de-

ceit—and that be a sober reality which survives the fluctuations both of time and of fancy—tell us if such a use of the term be not an utter misapplication—and whether with all the justice, as well as with all the severity of truth, it may not be retorted upon the head of him, who, though prized for the sagacity of a firm, secular, and much-exercised understanding, and honoured in the market-place for his experience in the walks and the ways of this world's business, has not so much as entered upon the beginning of wisdom, but is toiling away all his skill and all his energy on the frivolities of an idiot's dream.

SERMON VII.

ON THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH.

2 PETER III. 13.

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

THERE is a limit to the revelations of the Bible about futurity, and it were a mental or spiritual trespass to go beyond it. The reserve which it maintains in its informations, we also ought to maintain in our inquiries—satisfied to know little on every subject, where it has communicated little, and feeling our way into regions which are at present unseen, no further than the light of Scripture will carry us.

But while we attempt not to be "wise above that which is written," we should attempt, and

that most studiously, to be wise up to that which is written. The disclosures are very few and very partial, which are given to us of that bright and beautiful economy, which is to survive the ruins of our present one. But, still there are such disclosures—and on the principle of the things that are revealed belonging unto us, we have a right to walk up and down, for the purpose of observation, over the whole actual extent of them. What is made known of the details of immortality, is but small in the amount, nor are we furnished with the materials of any thing like a graphical or picturesque exhibition of its abodes of blessedness. But still somewhat is made known, and which, too, may be addressed to a higher principle than curiosity, being like every other Scripture, "profitable both for doctrine and for instruction in righteousness."

In the text before us, there are two leading points of information, which we should like successively to remark upon. The first is, that in the new economy which is to be reared for the accommodation of the blessed, there will be materialism, not merely new heavens, but also a new earth. The second is, that as distinguished from the present, which is an abode of rebellion, it will be an abode of righteousness.

I. We know historically that earth, that a solid material earth, may form the dwelling of sinless creatures, in full converse and friendship with the Being who made them—that, instead of a place of exile for outcasts, it may have a broad avenue of communication with the spiritual world, for the descent of ethereal beings from on high—that, like the member of an extended family, it may share in the regard and attention of the other members, and along with them be gladdened by the presence of him who is the Father of them all. To inquire how this can be, were to attempt a wisdom beyond Scripture: but to assert that this has been, and therefore may be, is to keep most strictly and modestly within the limits of the record. For, we there read, that God framed an apparatus of materialism, which, on his own surveying, he pronounced to be all very good, and the leading features of which may still be recognized among the things and the substances that are around us—and that he created man with the bodily organs and senses which we now wear—and placed him under the very canopy that is over our heads—and spread around him a scenery, perhaps lovelier in its tints, and more smiling and serene in the whole aspect of it, but certainly made up, in the main, of the same

objects that still compose the prospect of our visible contemplations—and there, working with his hands in a garden, and with trees on every side of him, and even with animals sporting at his feet, was this inhabitant of earth, in the midst of all those earthly and familiar accompaniments, in full possession of the best immunities of a citizen of heaven—sharing in the delight of angels, and while he gazed on the very beauties which we ourselves gaze upon, rejoicing in them most as the tokens of a present and presiding Deity. It were venturing on the region of conjecture to affirm, whether, if Adam had not fallen, the earth that we now tread upon, would have been the everlasting abode of him and his posterity. But certain it is, that man, at the first, had for his place this world, and, at the same time, for his privilege, an unclouded fellowship with God, and, for his prospect, an immortality, which death was neither to intercept nor put an end to. He was terrestrial in respect of condition, and yet celestial in respect both of character and enjoyment. His eye looked outwardly on a landscape of earth, while his heart breathed upwardly in the love of heaven. And though he trode the solid platform of our world, and was compassed about with its horizon—still was he within the circle

of God's favoured creation, and took his place among the freemen and the denizens of the great spiritual commonwealth.

This may serve to rectify an imagination, of which we think that all must be conscious—as if the grossness of materialism was only for those who had degenerated into the grossness of sin; and that, when a spiritualizing process had purged away all our corruption, then, by the stepping stones of a death and a resurrection, we should be borne away to some ethereal region, where sense, and body, and all in the shape either of audible sound, or of tangible substance, were unknown. And hence that strangeness of impression which is felt by you, should the supposition be offered, that in the place of eternal blessedness, there will be ground to walk upon; or scenes of luxuriance to delight the corporeal senses; or the kindly intercourse of friends talking familiarly, and by articulate converse together; or, in short, any thing that has the least resemblance to a local territory, filled with various accommodations, and peopled over its whole extent by creatures formed like ourselves —having bodies such as we now wear, and faculties of perception, and thought, and mutual communication, such as we now exercise. The

common imagination that we have of paradise on the other side of death, is, that of a lofty aerial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing—where all the warm and sensible accompaniments which give such an expression of strength, and life, and colouring, to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre, and imperceptible, and utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals here below—where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes that have no power of allurement, and certain unearthly ecstacies, with which it is felt impossible to sympathise. The holders of this imagination forget all the while, that really there is no essential connection between materialism and sin—that the world which we now inhabit, had all the amplitude and solidity of its present materialism, before sin entered into it—that God so far, on that account, from looking slightly upon it, after it had received the last touch of his creating hand, reviewed the earth, and the waters, and the firmament, and all the green herbage, with the living creatures, and the man whom he had raised in dominion over them, and he saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was all very good. They forget that

on the birth of materialism, when it stood out in the freshness of those glories which the great Architect of Nature had impressed upon it, that then "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They forget the appeals that are made everywhere in the Bible to this material workmanship—and how, from the face of these visible heavens, and the garniture of this earth that we tread upon, the greatness and the goodness of God are reflected on the view of his worshippers. No, my brethren, the object of the administration we sit under, is to extirpate sin, but it is not to sweep away materialism. By the convulsions of the last day, it may be shaken, and broken down from its present arrangements, and thrown into such fitful agitations, as that the whole of its existing framework shall fall to pieces, and with a heat so fervent as to melt its most solid elements, may it be utterly dissolved. And thus may the earth again become without form, and void, but without one particle of its substance going into annihilation. Out of the ruins of this second chaos, may another heaven and another earth be made to arise; and a new materialism, with other aspects of magnificence and beauty, emerge from the wreck of this mighty transformation; and the world be peo-

pled as before, with the varieties of material loveliness, and space be again lighted up into a firmament of material splendour.

Were our place of everlasting blessedness so purely spiritual as it is commonly imagined, then the soul of man, after, at death, having quitted his body, would quit it conclusively. That mass of materialism with which it is associated upon earth, and which many regard as a load and an incumbrance, would have leave to putrefy in the grave, without being revisited by supernatural power, or raised again out of the inanimate dust into which it had resolved. If the body be indeed a clog and a confinement to the spirit, instead of its commodious tenement, then would the spirit feel lightened by the departure it had made, and expatiate in all the buoyancy of its emancipated powers, over a scene of enlargement. And this is, doubtless, the prevailing imagination. But why then, after having made its escape from such a thraldom, should it ever recur to the prison-house of its old materialism, if a prison-house it really be. Why should the disengaged spirit again be fastened to the drag of that grosser and heavier substance, which many think has only the effect of weighing down its activity, and infus-

ing into the pure element of mind an ingredient which serves to cloud and to enfeeble it. In other words, what is the use of a day of resurrection, if the union which then takes place is to deaden, or to reduce all those energies that are commonly ascribed to the living principle, in a state of separation? But, as a proof of some metaphysical delusion upon this subject, the product, perhaps, of a wrong though fashionable philosophy, it would appear, that to embody the spirit is not the stepping-stone to its degradation, but to its preferment. The last day will be a day of triumph to the righteous—because the day of the re-entrance of the spirit to its much-loved abode, where its faculties, so far from being shut up into captivity, will find their free and kindred development in such material organs as are suited to them. The fact of the resurrection proves, that, with man at least, the state of a disembodied spirit, is a state of unnatural violence—and that the resurrection of his body is an essential step to the highest perfection of which he is susceptible. And it is indeed an homage to that materialism, which many are for expunging from the future state of the universe altogether—that ere the immaterial soul of man has reached the ultimate glory and blessedness which are designed for it,

it must return and knock at that very grave where lie the mouldered remains of the body which it wore—and there inquisition must be made for the flesh, and the sinews, and the bones, which the power of corruption has perhaps for centuries before, assimilated to the earth that is around them—and there, the minute atoms must be re-assembled into a structure that bears upon it the form and the lineaments, and the general aspect of a man—and the soul passes into this material framework, which is hereafter to be its lodging-place for ever—and that, not as its prison, but as its pleasant and befitting habitation—not to be trammelled, as some would have it, in a hold of materialism, but to be therein equipped for the services of eternity—to walk embodied among the bowers of our second paradise—to stand embodied in the presence of our God.

There will, it is true, be a change of personal constitution between a good man before his death, and a good man after his resurrection—not, however, that he will be set free from his body, but that he will be set free from the corrupt principle which is in his body—not that the materialism by which he is now surrounded will be done away, but that the taint of evil by

which this materialism is now pervaded, will be done away. Could this be effected without dying, then death would be no longer an essential stepping-stone to paradise. But it would appear of the moral virus which has been transmitted downwards from Adam, and is now spread abroad over the whole human family—it would appear, that to get rid of this, the old fabric must be taken down, and reared anew; and that, not of other materials, but of its own materials, only delivered of all impurity, as if by a refining process in the sepulchre. It is thus, that what is "sown in weakness, is raised in power"—and for this purpose, it is not necessary to get quit of materialism, but to get quit of sin, and so to purge materialism of its malady. It is thus that the dead shall come forth incorruptible—and those, we are told, who are alive at this great catastrophe, shall suddenly and mysteriously be changed. While we are compassed about with these vile bodies, as the apostle emphatically terms them, evil is present, and it is well, if through the working of the Spirit of grace, evil does not prevail. To keep this besetting enemy in check, is the task and the trial of our Christianity on earth—and it is the detaching of this poisonous ingredient which constitutes that for which the believer is represented as

groaning earnestly, even the redemption of the body that he now wears, and which will then be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorified body. And this will be his heaven, that he will serve God without a struggle, and in a full gale of spiritual delight—because with the full concurrence of all the feelings and all the faculties of his regenerated nature. Before death, sin is only repressed—after the resurrection, sin will be exterminated. Here he has to maintain the combat, with a tendency to evil still lodging in his heart, and working a perverse movement among his inclinations; but after his warfare in this world is accomplished, he will no longer be so thwarted—and he will set him down in another world, with the repose and the triumph of victory for his everlasting reward. The great constitutional plague of his nature will no longer trouble him; and there will be the charm of a genial affinity between the purity of his heart, and the purity of the element he breathes in. Still it will not be the purity of spirit escaped from materialism, but of spirit translated into a materialism that has been clarified of evil. It will not be the purity of souls unclothed as at death, but the purity of souls that have again been clothed upon at the resurrection.

But the highest homage that we know of to materialism, is that which God, manifest in the flesh, has rendered to it. That He, the Divinity, should have wrapt his unfathomable essence in one of its coverings, and expatiated amongst us in the palpable form and structure of a man; and that he should have chosen such a tenement, not as a temporary abode, but should have borne it with him to the place which he now occupies, and where he is now employed in preparing the mansions of his followers—that he should have entered within the vail, and be now seated at the right hand of the Father, with the very body which was marked by the nails upon his cross, and wherewith he ate and drank after his resurrection—that he who repelled the imagination of his disciples, as if they had seen a spirit, by bidding them handle him and see, and subjecting to their familiar touch, the flesh and the bones that encompassed him; that he should now be throned in universal supremacy, and wielding the whole power of heaven and earth, have every knee to bow at his name, and every tongue to confess, and yet all to the glory of God the Father—that humanity, that substantial and embodied humanity, should thus be exalted, and a voice of adoration from every creature, be lifted up to the Lamb for ever and

ever—does this look like the abolition of materialism, after the present system of it is destroyed; or does it not rather prove, that transplanted into another system, it will be preferred to celestial honours, and prolonged in immortality throughout all ages?

It has been our careful endeavour, in all that we have said, to keep within the limits of the record, and to offer no other remarks than those which may fitly be suggested by the circumstance, that a new earth is to be created, as well as a new heavens, for the future accommodation of the righteous. We have no desire to push the speculation beyond what is written—but it were, at the same time, well, that in all our representations of the immortal state, there was just the same force of colouring, and the same vivacity of scenic exhibition, that there is in the New Testament. The imagination of a total and diametric opposition between the region of sense and the region of spirituality, certainly tends to abate the interest with which we might otherwise look to the perspective that is on the other side of the grave; and to deaden all those sympathies that we else might have with the joys and the exercises of the blest in paradise. To rectify this, it is not necessary

to enter on the particularities of heaven—a topic on which the Bible is certainly most sparing and reserved in its communications. But a great step is gained, simply by dissolving the alliance that exists in the minds of many between the two ideas of sin and materialism; or proving, that when once sin is done away, it consists with all we know of God's administration, that materialism shall be perpetuated in the full bloom and vigour of immortality. It altogether holds out a warmer and more alluring picture of the elysium that awaits us, when told, that there, will be beauty to delight the eye; and music to regale the ear; and the comfort that springs from all the charities of intercourse between man and man, holding converse as they do on earth, and gladdening each other with the benignant smiles that play on the human countenance, or the accents of kindness that fall in soft and soothing melody from the human voice. There is much of the innocent, and much of the inspiring, and much to affect and elevate the heart, in the scenes and the contemplations of materialism—and we do hail the information of our text, that after the dissolution of its present frame-work, it will again be varied and decked out anew in all the graces of its unfading verdure, and of its unbounded variety—that in

addition to our direct and personal view of the Deity, when he comes down to tabernacle with men, we shall also have the reflection of him in a lovely mirror of his own workmanship—and that instead of being transported to some abode of dimness and of mystery, so remote from human experience, as to be beyond all comprehension, we shall walk for ever in a land replenished with those sensible delights, and those sensible glories, which, we doubt not, will lie most profusely scattered over the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

II. But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality. Though not so unlike the present world as many apprehend it, there will be one point of total dissimilarity betwixt them. It is not the entire substitution of spirit for matter, that will distinguish the future economy from the present. But it will be the entire substitution of righteousness for sin. It is this which signalizes the Christian from the Mahometan paradise—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, and the glories of a visible creation seen with bodily eyes, are excluded from it,—but that all which is vile in principle, or voluptuous in impurity,

will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterized. There will both be heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this speciality to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heavens and an earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Now, though the first topic of information that we educed from the text, may be regarded as not very practical, yet the second topic on which I now insist, is most eminently so. Were it the great characteristic of that spirituality which is to obtain in a future heaven, that it was a spirituality of essence, then occupying and pervading the place from which materialism had been swept away, we could not, by any possible method, approximate the condition we are in at present, to the condition we are to hold everlastingly. We cannot etherealize the matter that is around us—neither can we attenuate our own bodies, nor bring down the slightest degree of such a heaven to the earth that we now inhabit. But when we are told that materialism

is to be kept up, and that the spirituality of our future state lies not in the kind of substance which is to compose its framework, but in the character of those who people it—this puts, if not the fulness of heaven, at least a foretaste of heaven, within our reach. We have not to strain at a thing so impracticable, as that of diluting the material economy which is without us—we have only to reform the moral economy that is within us. We are now walking on a terrestrial surface, not more compact, perhaps, than the one we shall hereafter walk upon, and are now wearing terrestrial bodies, not firmer and more solid, perhaps, than those we shall hereafter wear. It is not by working any change upon them, that we could realize, to any extent, our future heaven. And this is simply done by opening the door of our heart for the influx of heaven's affections—by bringing the whole man, as made up of soul, and spirit, and body, under the presiding authority of heaven's principles.

This will make plain to you how it is, that it could be said in the New Testament, that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand"—and how, in that book, its place is marked out, not by locally pointing to any quarter, and saying, Lo,

here, or lo there, but by the simple affirmation that the kingdom of heaven is within you—and how, in defining what it was that constituted the kingdom of heaven, there is an enumeration, not of such circumstances as make up an outward condition, but of such feelings and qualities as make up a character, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost—and how the ushering in of the new dispensation is held equivalent to the introduction of this kingdom into the world—all making it evident, that if the purity and the principles of heaven begin to take effect upon our heart, what is essentially heaven begins with us, even in this world; that instead of ascending to some upper region, for the purpose of entering it, it may descend upon us, and make an actual entrance of itself into our bosoms; and that so far, therefore, from that remote and inaccessible thing which many do regard it, it may, through the influence of the word which is nigh unto you, and of the Spirit that is given to prayer, be lighted up in the inner man of an individual upon earth, whose person may even here, exemplify its graces, and whose soul may even here realize a measure of its enjoyments.

And hence one great purpose of the incarna-

tion of our Saviour. He came down amongst us in the full perfection of heaven's character, and has made us see, that it is a character which may be embodied. All its virtues were, in his case, infused into a corporeal frame-work, and the substance of these lower regions was taken into intimate and abiding association with the spirit of the higher. The ingredient which is heavenly, admits of being united with the ingredient which is earthly—so that we, who, by nature, are of the earth, and earthly, could we catch of that pure and celestial element which made the man Christ Jesus to differ from all other men, then might we too be formed into that character, by which it is that the members of the family above differ from those of the outcast family beneath. Now, it is expressly said of him, that he is set before us as an example; and we are required to look to that living exhibition of him, where all the graces of the upper sanctuary are beheld as in a picture; and instead of an abstract, we have in his history a familiar representation of such worth, and piety, and excellence, as could they only be stamped upon our own persons, and borne along with us to the place where he now dwelleth—instead of being shunned as aliens, we should be welcomed and recognized as seemly companions for the inmates

of that place of holiness. And, in truth, the great work of Christ's disciples upon earth, is a constant and busy process of assimilation to their Master who is in heaven. And we live under a special economy, that has been set up for the express purpose of helping it forward. It is for this, in particular, that the Spirit is provided. We are changed into the image of the Lord, even by the Spirit of the Lord. Nursed out of this fulness, we grow up unto the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus—and instead of heaven being a remote and mysterious unknown, heaven is brought near to us by the simple expedient of inspiring us where we now stand, with its love, and its purity, and its sacredness. We learn from Christ, that the heavenly graces are all of them compatible with the wear of an earthly body, and the circumstances of an earthly habitation. It is not said in how many of its features the new earth will differ from, or be like unto the present one—but we, by turning from our iniquities unto Christ, push forward the resemblance of the one to the other, in the only feature that is specified, even that "therein dwelleth righteousness."

And had we only the character of heaven, we should not be long of feeling what that is

which essentially makes the comfort of heaven. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity; therefore, God thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows." Let us but love the righteousness which he loves, and hate the iniquity which he hateth, and this, of itself, would so soften and attune the mechanism of our moral nature, that in all the movements of it, there should be joy. It is not sufficiently adverted to, that the happiness of heaven lies simply and essentially in the well-going machinery of a well-conditioned soul—and that according to its measure, it is the same in kind with the happiness of God, who liveth for ever in bliss ineffable, because he is unchangeable in being good, and upright, and holy. There may be audible music in heaven, but its chief delight will be in the music of well-poised affections, and of principles in full and consenting harmony with the laws of eternal rectitude. There may be visions of loveliness there, but it will be the loveliness of virtue, as seen directly in God, and as reflected back again in family likeness from all his children—it will be this that shall give its purest and sweetest transports to the soul. In a word, the main reward of paradise, is spiritual joy—and that, springing at once from the love and the possession of spiritual excellence. It

is such a joy as sin extinguishes on the moment of its entering the soul; and such a joy as is again restored to the soul, and that immediately on its being restored to righteousness.

It is thus that heaven may be established upon earth, and the petition of our Lord's prayer be fulfilled, "Thy kingdom come." This petition receives its best explanation from the one which follows: "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." It just requires a similarity of habit and character in the two places, to make out a similarity of enjoyment. Let us attend, then, to the way in which the services of the upper sanctuary are rendered—not in the spirit of legality, for this gendereth to bondage; but in the spirit of love, which gendereth to the beatitude of the affections rejoicing in their best and most favourite indulgence. They do not work there, for the purpose of making out the conditions of a bargain. They do not act agreeably to the pleasure of God, in order to obtain the gratification of any distinct will or distinct pleasure of their own, in return for it. Their will is, in fact, identical with the will of God. There is a perfect unison of taste and of inclination, between the creature and the Creator. They are in their element, when they are

feeling righteously, and doing righteously. Obedience is not drudgery, but delight to them; and as much as there is of the congenial between animal nature, and the food that is suitable to it, so much is there of the congenial between the moral nature of heaven, and its sacred employments and services. Let the will of God, then, be done here, as it is done there, and not only will character and conduct be the same here as there, but they will also resemble each other in the style, though not in the degree of their blessedness. The happiness of heaven will be exemplified upon earth, along with the virtue of heaven—for, in truth, the main ingredient of that happiness is not given them in payment for work; but it lies in the love they bear to the work itself. A man is never happier than when employed in that which he likes best. This is all a question of taste: but should such a taste be given as to make it a man's meat and drink to do the will of his Father, then is he in perfect readiness for being carried upwards to heaven, and placed beside the pure river of water of life, that proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is the way in which you may make a heaven upon earth, not by heaping your reluctant offers at the shrine of legality, but by

serving God because you love him; and doing his will, because you delight to do him honour.

And here we may remark, that the only possible conveyance for this new principle into the heart, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that in no other way than through the acceptance of its free pardon, sealed by the blood of an atonement, which exalts the Lawgiver, can the soul of man be both emancipated from the fear of terror, and solemnized into the fear of humble and holy reverence—that it is only in conjunction with the faith which justifies, that the love of gratitude, and the love of moral esteem, are made to arise in the bosom of regenerated man; and, therefore, to bring down the virtues of heaven, as well as the peace of heaven, into this lower world, we know not what else can be done, than to urge upon you the great propitiation of the New Testament—nor are we aware of any expedient by which all the cold and freezing sensations of legality can be done away, but by your thankful and unconditional acceptance of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

SERMON VIII.

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS IV. 20.

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

THERE is a most important lesson to be derived from the variety of senses in which the phrases "kingdom of God," and "kingdom of heaven," are evidently made use of in the New Testament. If it, at one time, carry our thoughts to that place where God sits in visible glory, and where, surrounded by the family of the blessed, he presides in full and spiritual authority—it, at another time, turns our thoughts inwardly upon ourselves, and instead of leading us to say, Lo, here, or lo, there, as if to some local habitation at a distance, it leads us, by the declaration,

that the "kingdom of God is within us," to look for it into our own breast, and to examine whether heavenly affections have been substituted there in the place of earthly ones. Such is the tendency of our imagination upon this subject, that the kingdom of heaven is never mentioned, without our minds being impelled thereby to take an upward direction—to go aloft to that place of spaciousness, and of splendour, and of psalmody, which forms the residence of angels; and where the praises both of redeemed and unfallen creatures, rise in one anthem of gratulation to the Father, who rejoices over them all. Now, it is evident, that in dwelling upon such an elysium as this, the mind can picture to itself a thousand delicious accompaniments, which, apart from moral and spiritual character altogether, are fitted to regale animal, and sensitive, and unrenewed man. There may be sights of beauty and brilliancy for the eye. There may be sounds of sweetest melody for the ear. There may be innumerable sensations of delight, from the adaptation which obtains between the materialism of surrounding heaven, and the materialism of our own transformed and glorified bodies. There may even be poured upon us, in richest abundance, a higher and a nobler class of enjoyments—and

separate still from the possession of holiness, of that peculiar quality, by the accession of which a sinner is turned into a saint, and the man who, before, had an entire aspect of secularity and of the world, looks as if he had been cast over again in another mould, and come out breathing godly desires, and aspiring, with a newly created fervour, after godly enjoyments. And so, without any such conversion as this, heaven may still be conceived to minister a set of very refined and intellectual gratifications. One may figure it so formed, as to adapt itself to the senses of man, though he should possess not one single virtue of the temple, or of the sanctuary—and one may figure it to be so formed, as, though alike destitute of these virtues, to adapt itself even to the spirit of man, and to many of the loftier principles and capacities of his nature. His taste may find an ever-recurring delight in the panorama of its sensible glories; and his fancy wander untired among all the realities and all the possibilities of created excellence; and his understanding be feasted to ecstacy among those endless varieties of truth, which are ever pouring in a rich flood of discovery, upon his mind; and even his heart be kept in a glow of warm and kindly affection among the cordialities of that benevolence, by

which he is surrounded. All this is possible to be conceived of heaven—and when we add its secure and everlasting exemption from the agonies of hell, let us not wonder, that such a heaven should be vehemently desired by those who have not advanced by the very humblest degree of spiritual preparation, for the real heaven of the New Testament—who have not the least congeniality of feeling with that which forms its essential and characteristic blessedness—who cannot sustain on earth for a very short interval of retirement, the labour and the weariness of communion with God—who, though they could relish to the uttermost, all the sensible and all the intellectual joys of heaven, yet hold no taste of sympathy whatever, with its hallelujahs, and its songs of raptured adoration —and who, therefore, if transported at this moment, or if transported after death, with the frame and character of soul that they have at this moment, to the New Jerusalem, and the city of the living God, would positively find themselves aliens, and out of their kindred and rejoicing element, however much they may sigh after a paradise of pleasure, or a paradise of poetry.

It may go to dissipate this sentimental illu-

sion, if we ponder well the meaning which is often assigned to the kingdom of heaven in the Bible—if we reflect, that it is often made to attach personally to a human creature upon earth—as well as to be situated locally in some distant and mysterious region away from us—that to be the subjects of such a kingdom, it is not indispensable that our residence be within the limits of an assigned territory, any more, in fact, than that the subject of an earthly sovereign should not remain so, though travelling, for a time, beyond the confines of his master's jurisdiction. He may, though away from his country in person, carry about with him in mind a full principle of allegiance to his country's sovereign—and may both, in respect of legal duty, and of his own most willing and affectionate compliance with it, remain associated with him both in heart and in political relationship. He is still a member of that kingdom, in the domains of which he was born—and in the very same way, may a man be travelling the journey of life in this world, and be all the while a member of the kingdom of heaven. The Being who reigns in supreme authority there, may, even in this land of exile and alienation, have some one devoted subject, who renders to the same authority the deference of his heart,

and the subordination of his whole practice. The will of God may possess such a moral ascendancy over his will, as that when the one commands, the other promptly and cheerfully obeys. The character of God may stand revealed in such charms of perfection and gracefulness to the eye of his mind, that by ever looking to him, he both loves and is made like unto him. A sense of God may pervade his every hour, and every employment, even as it is the hand of God which preserves him continually, and through the actual power of God, that he lives and moves, as well as has his being. Such a man, if such a man there be on the face of our world, has the kingdom of God set up in his heart. He is already one of the children of the kingdom. He is not locally in heaven, and yet his heaven is begun. He has in his eye the glories of heaven; though, as yet, he sees them through a glass darkly. He feels in his bosom the principles of heaven; though still at war with the propensities of nature, they do not yet reign in all the freeness of an undisputed ascendancy. He carries in his heart the peace, and the joy, and the love, and the elevation of heaven; though, under the incumbrance of a vile body, the spiritual repast which is thus provided, is not without its mixtures, and

without its mitigation. In a word, the essential elements of heaven's reward, and of heaven's felicity, are all in his possession. He tastes the happiness of heaven in kind, though not in its full and finished degree. When he gets to heaven above, he will not meet there with a happiness differing in character from that which he now feels; but only higher in gradation. There may be crowns of material splendour. There may be trees of unfading loveliness. There may be pavements of emerald—and canopies of brightest radiance—and gardens of deep and tranquil security—and palaces of proud and stately decoration—and a city of lofty pinnacles, through which there unceasing flows a river of gladness, and where jubilee is ever rung with the concord of seraphic voices. But these are only the accessaries of heaven. They form not the materials of its substantial blessedness. Of this the man who toils in humble drudgery, an utter stranger to the delights of sensible pleasure, or the fascinations of sensible glory, has got already a foretaste in his heart. It consists not in the enjoyment of created good, nor in the survey of created magnificence. It is drawn in a direct stream, through the channels of love and of contemplation, from the fulness of the Creator. It emanates from the counte-

nance of God, manifesting the spiritual glories of his holy and perfect character, on those whose characters are kindred to his own. And if on earth there is no tendency towards such a character—no process of restoration to the lost image of the Godhead—no delight in prayer —no relish for the sweets of intercourse with our Father, now unseen, but then to be revealed to the view of his immediate worshippers—then, let our imaginations kindle as they may, with the beatitudes of our fictitious heaven, the true heaven of the Bible is what we shall never reach, because it is a heaven that we are not fitted to enjoy.

But such a view of the matter seems not merely to dissipate a sentimental illusion which obtains upon this subject. It also serves to dissipate a theological illusion. Ere we can enter heaven, there must be granted to us a legal capacity of admission—and Christ by his atoning death, and perfect righteousness, has purchased this capacity for those who believe—and they, by the very act of believing, are held to be in possession of it, just as a man by stretching out his hand to a deed or a passport, becomes vested with all the privileges which are thereby conveyed to the holder. Now, in the zeal of

controversialists, (and it is a point most assuredly about which they cannot be too zealous)—in their zeal to clear up and to demonstrate the ground on which the sinner's legal capacity must rest—there has, with many, been a sad overlooking of what is no less indispensable, even his personal capacity. And yet even on the lowest and grossest conceptions of what that is which constitutes the felicity of heaven, it would be no heaven, and no place of enjoyment at all, without a personal adaptation on the part of its occupiers, to the kind of happiness which is current there. If that happiness consisted entirely in sights of magificence, of what use would it be to confer a title-deed of entry on a man who was blind? To make it heaven to him, his eyes must be opened. Or, if that happiness consisted in sounds of melody, of what use would a passport be to the man who was deaf? To make out a heaven for him, a change must be made on the person which he wears, as well as in the place which he occupies—and his ears must be unstopped. Or, if that happiness consisted in fresh and perpetual accessions of new and delightful truth to the understanding, what would rights and legal privileges avail to him who was sunk in helpless idiotism? To provide him with a heaven, it is not enough that

he be transported to a place among the mansions of the celestial: he must be provided with a new faculty—and, as before, a change behoved to be made upon the senses; so now, ere heaven can be heaven to its occupier, a change must be made upon his mind. And, in like manner, my brethren, if that happiness shall consist in the love of God for his goodness, and in the love of God for the moral and spiritual excellence which belongs to him—if it shall consist in the play and exercise of affections directed to such objects as are alone worthy of their most exalted regard—if it shall consist in the movements of a heart now attracted in reverence and admiration towards all that is noble, and righteous, and holy—it is not enough to constitute a heaven for the sinner, that God is there in visible manifestation, or that heaven is lighted up to him in a blaze of spiritual glory. His heart must be made a fit recipient for the impression of that glory. Of what possible enjoyment to him is heaven, as his purchased inheritance, if heaven be not also his precious and his much-loved home? To create enjoyment for a man, there must be a suitableness between the taste that is in him, and the objects that are around him. To make a natural man happy upon earth, we may let his taste alone, and surround

him with favourable circumstances—with smiling abundance, and merry companionship, and bright anticipations of fortune or of fame, and the salutations of public respect, and the gaieties of fashionable amusement, and the countless other pleasures of a world, which yields so much to delight and to diversify the short-lived period of its fleeting generations. To make the same man happy in heaven, it would suffice simply to transmit him there with the same taste, and to surround him with the same circumstances. But God has not so ordered heaven. He will not suit the circumstances of heaven to the character of man—and therefore to make it, that man can be happy there, nothing remains but to suit the character of man to the circumstances of heaven—and, therefore it is, that to bring about heaven to a sinner, it is not enough that there be the preparation of a place for him, there must be a preparation of him for the place—it is not enough that he be meet in law, he must be meet in person—it is not enough that there be a change in his forensic relation towards God, there must be a change in the actual disposition of his heart towards him; and unless delivered from his earth-born propensities—unless a clean heart be created, and a right spirit be renewed—unless trans-

formed into a holy and a godlike character, it is quite in vain to have put a deed of entry into his hands—heaven will have no charm for him—all its notes of rapture will fall with tasteless insipidity upon his ear—and justification itself will cease to be a privilege.

Let us cease to wonder, then, at the frequent application, in Scripture, of this phrase to a state of personal feeling and character upon earth—and rather let us press upon our remembrance the important lessons which are to be gathered from such an application. In that passage where it is said, that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," there can be no doubt that the reference is altogether personal, for the apostle is here contrasting the man who, in these things, serveth Christ, with the man who eateth unto the Lord, or who eateth not unto the Lord. And in the passage now before us, there can be as little doubt, that the reference is to the kingdom of God, as fixed and substantiated upon the character of the human soul. He was just before alluding to those who could talk of the things of Christ, while it remained questionable whether there was any change or any effect that could at all attest the

power of these things upon their person and character. This is the point which he proposed to ascertain on his next visit to them. "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." It is not enough to mark you as the children of this kingdom; or as those over whose hearts the reign of God is established; or as those in whom a preparation is going on here for a place of glory and blessedness hereafter—that you know the terms of orthodoxy, or that you can speak its language. If even an actual belief in its doctrine could reside in your mind, without fruit and without influence, this would as little avail you. But it is well to know, both from experience and from the information of him who knew what was in man, that an actual belief of the Gospel, is at all times an effectual belief,—that upon the entrance of such a belief, the kingdom of God comes to us with power, being that which availeth, even faith, working by love, and purifying the heart, and overcoming the world.

One of the simplest cases of the kingdom of God in word, and not in power, is that of a child, with its memory stored in passages of

Scripture, and in all the answers to all the questions of a substantial and well-digested catechism. In such an instance, the tongue may be able to rehearse the whole expression of evangelical truth, while neither the meaning of the truth is perceived by the understanding, nor of consequence, can the moral influence of the truth be felt in the heart. The learner has got words, but nothing more. This is the whole fruit of his acquisition—nor would it make any difference, in as far as the effect at the time is concerned, though, instead of words adapted to the expression of Christian doctrine, they had been the words of a song, or a fable, or any secular narrative and performance whatever. This is all undeniable enough—if we could only prevail on many men, and many women, not to deny its application to themselves—if we could only convince our grown-up children of the absolute futility of many of their exercises—if we could only arouse from their dormancy, our listless readers of the Bible—our men, who make a mere piece-work of their Christianity; who, in making way through the Scriptures, do it by the page, and, in addressing prayers to their Maker, do it by the sentence; with whom the perusal of the sacred volume, is absolutely little better than a mere exercise of the lip, or of

the eye, and a preference for orthodoxy is little better than a preference for certain familiar and well-known sounds; where the thinking principle is almost never in contact with the matter of theological truth, however conversant both their mouths and their memories may be with the language of it—so that in fact the doctrine by the knowledge of which, and the power of which it is, that we are saved, lies as effectually hidden from their minds, as if it lay wrapt in hieroglyphical obscurity; or, as if their intellectual organ was shut against all communication with any thing without them—and thus it is, that what is not perceived by the mental eye, having no possible operation upon the mental feelings, or mental purposes, the kingdom of God cometh to them in word only, while not in power.

But again, what is translated word in this verse, is also capable of being rendered by the term reason. It may not only denote that which constitutes the material vehicle by which the argument conceived in the mind of one man is translated into the mind of another—it may also denote the argument itself; and when rendered in this way, it offers to our notice a very interesting case, of which there are not want-

ing many exemplifications. In the case just now adverted to, the mere word is in the mouth, without its corresponding idea being in the mind; but in the case immediately before us, ideas are present as well as words, and every intellectual faculty is at its post, for the purpose of entertaining them—the attention most thoroughly awake—and the curiosity on the stretch of its utmost eagerness—and the judgment most busily employed in the work of comparing one doctrine, and one declaration with another—and the reason conducting its long or its intricate processes—and, in a word, the whole machinery of the mind as powerfully stimulated by a theological, as it ever can be, by a natural or scientific speculation—and yet, with this seeming advancement that it makes from the language of Christianity to the substanceo of Christianity, what shall we think of it, if there be no advancement whatever in the power of Christianity—no accession to the soul of any one of those three ingredients, which, taken together, make up the apostle's definition of the kingdom of God—no augmentation either of its righteousness, or its peace, or its joy in the Holy Ghost—the man, no doubt, very much engrossed and exercised with the subject of divinity, but with as little of the real spirit and

character of divinity, thereby transferred into his own spirit, and his own character, as if he were equally engrossed and equally exercised with the subject of mathematics—remaining in short, after all his doctrinal acquisitions of the truth, an utter stranger to the moral influence of the truth—and proving, in the fact of his being practically and personally the very same man as before, that if the kingdom of God is not in word, it is as little in argument, but in power.

If it be of importance to know, that a man may lay hold, by his memory, of all the language of Christianity, and yet not be a Christian—it is also of importance to know, that a man may lay hold, by his understanding, of all the doctrine of Christianity, and yet not be a Christian. It is our opinion, that in this case the man has only an apparent belief, without having an actual belief—that all the doctrine is conceived by him, without being credited by him—that it is the object of his fancy, without being the object of his faith—and that, as on the one hand, if the conviction be real, the consequence of another heart, and another character, will be sure—so, on the other hand, and on the principle of "by their fruits shall ye

know them," if he want the fruit, it is just because he is in want of the foundation—if there be no produce, it is because there is no principle—having experienced no salvation from sin here, he shall experience no salvation from the abode of sinners hereafter. If faith were present with him, he would be kept by the power of it unto salvation, from both—but destitute as he proves himself to be now of the faith which sanctifies, he will be found then, in the midst of all his semblances and all his delusions, to have been equally destitute of the faith which justifies.

And it is, perhaps, not so difficult to stir up, in the mind of the learned controversialist, and the deeply-exercised scholar, the suspicion, that with all his acquirements in the lore of theology, he is, in respect of its personal influence upon himself, still in a state of moral and spiritual unsoundness—it is not so difficult to raise this feeling of self-condemnation in his mind, as it is to do it in the mind of him who has selected his one favourite article, and there, resolved, if die he must, to die hard, has taken up his obstinate and immoveable position—and retiring within the intrenchment of a few verses of the Bible, will defy all the truth and all the

thunder of its remaining declarations; and with an orthodoxy which carries on all its play in his head, without one moving or one softening touch upon his heart, will stand out to the eye of the world, both in avowed principle, and in its corresponding practice, a secure, sturdy, firm, impregnable Antinomian. He thinks that he will have heaven, because he has faith. But if his faith do not bring the virtues of heaven into his heart, it will never spread either the glory or the security of heaven around his person. The region to which he vainly thinks of looking forward, is a region of spirituality—and he himself must be spiritualized, ere it can prove to him a region of enjoyment. If he count on a different paradise from this, he is as widely mistaken as they who dream of the luxury that awaits them in the paradise of Mahomet. He misinterprets the whole undertaking of Jesus Christ. He degrades the salvation which He hath achieved, into a salvation from animal pain. He transforms the heaven which He has opened, into a heaven of animal gratifications. He forgets, that on the great errand of man's restoration, it is not more necessary to recal our departed species to the heaven from which they had wandered, than it is to recal to the bosom of man its departed worth,

and its departed excellence. The one is what faith will do on the other side of time. But the other just as certainly faith must do on this side of time. It is here that heaven begins. It is here that eternal life is entered upon. It is here that man first breathes the air of immortality. It is upon earth that he learns the rudiments of a celestial character, and first tastes of celestial enjoyments. It is here, that the well of water is struck out in the heart of renovated man, and that fruit is made to grow unto holiness, and then, in the end, there is life everlasting. The man whose threadbare orthodoxy is made up of meagre and unfruitful positions, may think that he walks in clearness, while he is only walking in the cold light of speculation. He walks in the feeble sparks of his own kindling. Were it fire from the sanctuary, it would impart to his unregenerated bosom, of the heat, and spirit, and love of the sanctuary. This is the sure result of the faith that is unfeigned—and all that a feigned faith can possibly make out, will be a fictitious title-deed, which will not stand before the light of the great day of final examination. And thus will it be found, I fear, in many cases of marked and ostentatious professorship, how possible a thing it is to have an appearance of the king-

dom of God in word, and the kingdom of God in letter, and the kingdom of God in controversy —while the kingdom of God is not in power.

But once more—instead of laying a false security upon one article, it is possible to have a mind familiarized to all the articles—to admit the need of holiness, and to demonstrate the channel of influence by which it is brought down from heaven upon the hearts of believers —to cast an eye of intelligence over the whole symphony and extent of Christian doctrine—to lay bare those ligaments of connection by which a true faith in the mind is ever sure to bring a new spirit and a new practice along with it— and to hold up the lights both of Scripture and of experience, over the whole process of man's regeneration. It is possible for one to do all this—and yet to have no part in that regeneration—to declare with ability and effect the Gospel to others, and yet himself be a castaway— to unravel the whole of that spiritual mechanism, by which a sinner is transformed into a saint, while he does not exemplify that mechanism upon his own person—to explain what must be done, and what must be undergone in the process of becoming one of the children of the kingdom, while he himself remains one of the

children of this world. To him the kingdom of God hath come in word, and it hath come in letter, and it hath come in natural discernment; but it hath not come in power. He may have profoundly studied the whole doctrine of the kingdom—and have conceived the various ideas of which it is composed—and have embodied them in words—and have poured them forth in utterance—and yet be as little spiritualized by these manifold operations, as the air is spiritualized by its being the avenue for the sounds of his voice to the ears of his listening auditory. The living man may, with all the force of his active intelligence, be a mere vehicle of transmission. The Holy Ghost may leave the message to take its own way through his mind—and may refuse the accession of his influence, till it make its escape from the lips of the preacher—and may trust for its conveyance to those aerial undulations by which the report is carried forward to an assembled multitude—and may only, after the entrance of hearing has been effected for the terms of the message, may only, after the unaided powers of moral and physical nature have brought the matter thus far, may then, and not till then, add his own influence to the truths of the message, and send them with this impregnation from the ear to the con-

science of any whom he listeth. And thus from the workings of a cold and desolate bosom in the human expounder, may there proceed a voice, which on its way to some of those who are assembled around him, shall turn out to be a voice of urgency and power. He may be the instrument of blessings to others, which have never come with kindly or effective influence upon his own heart. He may inspire an energy, which he does not feel, and pour a comfort into the wounded spirit, the taste of which, and the enjoyment of which is not permitted to his own—and nothing can serve more effectually than this experimental fact to humble him, and to demonstrate the existence of a power which cannot be wielded by all the energies of Nature—a power often refused to eloquence, often refused to the might and the glory of human wisdom—often refused to the most strenuous exertions of human might and human talent, and generally met with in richest abundance among the ministrations of the men of simplicity and prayer.

Some of you have heard of the individual who, under an oppression of the severest melancholy, implored relief and counsel from his physician. The unhappy patient was advised

to attend the performances of a comedian, who had put all the world into ecstacies. But it turned out, that the patient was the comedian himself—and that while his smile was the signal of merriment to all, his heart stood uncheered and motionless, amid the gratulations of an applauding theatre—and evening after evening, did he kindle around him a rapture in which he could not participate—a poor, helpless, dejected mourner, among the tumults of that high-sounding gaiety, which he himself had created.

Let all this touch our breasts with the persuasion, of the nothingness of man. Let it lead us to withdraw our confidence from the mere instrument, and to carry it upwards to him who alone worketh all in all. Let it reconcile us to the arrangements of his providence, and assure our minds, that he can do with one arrangement, what we fondly anticipated from another. Let us cease to be violently affected by the mutabilities of a fleeting and a shifting world—and let nothing be suffered the power of dissolving for an instant, that connection of trust which should ever subsist between our minds and the will of the all-working Deity. Above all, let us carefully separate between our liking for certain accompaniments of the

word, and our liking for the word itself. Let us be jealous of those human preferences, which may bespeak some human and adventitious influence upon our hearts, and be altogether different from the influence of Christian truth upon Christianized and sanctified affections. Let us be tenacious only of one thing—not of holding by particular ministers—not of saying, that "I am of Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos"—not of idolizing the servant, while the Master is forgotten,—but let us hold by the Head, even Christ. He is the source of all spiritual influence—and while the agents whom he employs, can do no more than bring the kingdom of God to you in word—it lies with him either to exalt one agency, or to humble and depress another—and either with or without such an agency, by the demonstration of that Spirit, which is given unto faith, to make the kingdom of God come into your hearts with power.

SERMON IX.

ON THE REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

GALATIANS III. 23.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

"SHUT up unto the faith." This is the expression which we fix upon as the subject of our present discourse—and to let you more effectually into the meaning of it, it may be right to state, that in the preceding clause "kept under the law," the term *kept*, is, in the original Greek, derived from a word which signifies a sentinel. The mode of conception is altogether military. The law is made to act the part of a sentry, guarding every avenue but one—and that one leads those who are compelled to take it to the faith of the Gospel. They are shut up to this

faith as their only alternative—like an enemy driven by the superior tactics of an opposing general, to take up the only position in which they can maintain themselves, or fly to the only town in which they can find a refuge or a security. This seems to have been a favourite style of argument with Paul, and the way in which he often carried on an intellectual warfare with the enemies of his Master's cause. It forms the basis of that masterly and decisive train of reasoning, which we have in his epistle to the Romans. By the operation of a skilful tactics, he, (if we may be allowed the expression) manœuvered them, and shut them up to the faith of the Gospel. It gave prodigious effect to his argument, when he reasoned with them, as he often does, upon their own principles, and turned them into instruments of conviction against themselves. With the Jews he reasoned as a Jew. He made a full concession to them of the leading principles of Judaism—and this gave him possession of the vantage ground upon which these principles stood. He made use of the Jewish law as a sentinel to shut them out of every other refuge, and to shut them up to the refuge laid before them in the Gospel. He led them to Christ by a schoolmaster which they could not refuse—and the lesson of this school-

master, though a very decisive, was a very short one. "Cursed be he that continueth not in all the words of this law to do them." But, in point of fact, they had not done them. To them then belonged the curse of the violated law. The awful severity of its sanctions was upon them. They found the faith and the free offer of the Gospel to be the only avenue open to receive them. They were shut up unto this avenue; and the law, by concluding them all to be under sin, left them no other outlet but the free act of grace and of mercy laid before us in the New Testament.

But this is not the only example of that peculiar way in which St. Paul has managed his discussions with the enemies of the faith. He carried the principle of being all things to all men into his very reasonings. He had Gentiles as well as Jews to contend with—and he often made some sentiment or conviction of their own, the starting point of his argument. In this same epistle to the Romans, he pleaded with the Gentiles the acknowledged law of nature and of conscience. In his speech to the men of Athens, he dated his argument from a point in their own superstition. In this way he drew converts both from the ranks of Judaism,

and the ranks of idolatry—and whether it was the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, or the school of poetry and philosophy in countries of refinement, that he had to contend with, his accomplished mind was never at a loss for principles by which he bore down the hostility of his adversaries, and shut them up unto the faith.

But there is a fashion in philosophy as well as in other things. In the course of centuries, new schools are formed, and the old, with all their doctrines, and all their plausibilities, sink into oblivion. The restless appetite of the human mind for speculation, must have novelties to feed upon—and after the countless fluctuations of two thousand years, the age in which we live has its own taste, and its own style of sentiment to characterize it. If Paul, vested with a new apostolical commission, were to make his appearance amongst us, we should like to know how he would shape his argument to the reigning taste and philosophy of the times. We should like to confront him with the literati of the day, and hear him lift his intrepid voice in our halls and colleges. In his speech to the men of Athens, he refers to certain of their own poets. We should like to hear his references to the poetry and the publications of modern Europe—

and while the science of this cultivated age stood to listen in all the pride of academic dignity, we should like to know the arguments of him who was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

But all this is little better than the indulgence of a dream. St. Paul has already fought the good fight, and his course is finished. The battles of the faith are now in other hands—and though the wisdom, and the eloquence, and the inspiration of Paul have departed from among us, yet he has left behind him the record of his principles. With this for our guide, we may attempt to do what he himself calls upon us to do. We may attempt to be followers of him. We may imitate him in the intrepid avowal of his principles—and we may try, however humbly and imperfectly, to imitate his style of defending them. We may accommodate our argument to the reigning principles of the day. We may be all things to all men—and out of the leading varieties of taste and of sentiment which obtain in the present age, and in the present country, we may try if we can collect something, which may be turned into an instrument of conviction for reclaiming men from their delusions, and shutting them up unto the faith.

There is first, then, the school of Natural Religion—a school founded on the competency of the human mind to know God by the exercise of its own faculties—to clothe him in the attributes of its own demonstration—to serve him by a worship and a law of its own discovery—and to assign to him a mode of procedure in the administration of this vast universe, upon the strength and the plausibility of its own theories. We have not time at present for exposing the rash and unphilosophical audacity of all these presumptions. We lay hold of one of them, and we maintain, that if steadily adhered to, and consistently carried into its consequences, it would empty the school of natural religion of all its disciples—it would shut them up unto the faith, and impress one rapid and universal movement into the school of Christ. The principle which we allude to makes a capital figure in their self-formed speculations; and it is neither more nor less than the judicial government of God over moral and accountable creatures. They hold that there is a law. They hold the human race to be bound to obedience. They hold the authority of the law to be supported by sanctions; and that the truth, and justice, and dignity of the Supreme Being are involved in these sanctions being enforced and executed. One

step more, and they are fairly shut up unto the faith. That law which they hold to be in full authority and operation over us, has been most unquestionably violated. We appeal, as Paul did before us, to the actual state of the human heart, and of human performances. We ask them to open their eyes to the world around them—to respect, like true philosophers, the evidence of observation, and not to flinch from the decisive undeniable fact which this evidence lays before them. Men are under the law, and that law they have violated. "There is not a just man on earth, that sinneth not." It is not to open, shameless and abandoned profligacy, that we are pointing your attention. We make our confident appeal to the purest and loveliest of the species. We rest our cause with the most virtuous individual of our nature. We enter his heart, and from what passes there, we can gather enough, and more than enough, to overthrow this tottering and unsupported fabric. We take a survey of its desires, its wishes, its affections—and we put the question to the consciousness of its possessor, if all these move in obedient harmony even to the law of natural religion. The external conduct viewed separately and in itself, is, in the eye of every enlightened moralist, nothing. It is mere visible display. Virtue con-

sists in the motive which lies behind it; and the soul is the place of its essential residence. Bring the soul then into immediate comparison with the law of God. Think of the pure and spiritual service which it exacts from you. Amid all the busy and complicated movements of the inner man, is there no estrangement from God? Are there no tumultuous wanderings from that purity, and goodness, and truth, which even philosophers ascribe to him? Is there no shortcoming from the holiness of his law, and the magnificence of his eternity? Is there no slavish devotion to the paltry things of sense and of the world? Is there no dreary interval of hours together, when God is unfelt and unthought of? Is there no one time when the mind delivers itself up to the guidance of its own feelings, and its own vanities—when it moves at a distance from heaven—and whether in solitude or among acquaintances, carries along, without any reference to that Being whose arm is perpetually upon me; who, at this moment, is at my right hand, and measures out to me every hairbreadth of my existence—who upholds me through every point of that time which runs from the first cry of my infancy, to that dark hour when the weight of my dying agonies is upon me—whose love and whose kindness are

ever present, to give me every breath which I draw, and every comfort which I enjoy? We grant the disciples of natural religion the truth of their own principle, that we are under the moral government of the Almighty—and by the simple addition of one undeniable fact to their speculation, we shut them up unto the faith. The simple fact is, that we are rebels to that government, and the punishment of these rebels is due to the vindication of its insulted authority. To say, that God will perpetually interpose with an act of oblivion, would be vastly convenient for us—but what then becomes of that moral government which figures away in the demonstrations of moralists? Does it turn out after all, to be nothing more than an idle and unmeaning declamation, on which they love to expatiate—without any thing like real attention or belief on the part of the thinking principle? If they are not true to their own professed convictions, we can undertake to shut them up to nothing. This is slipping from under us—but it is by an actual desertion of their own principle. If you cannot get them to stand to the argument, the argument is discharged upon them in vain. If this be the result, we do not promise ourselves that all we can say shall have any weight upon their

convictions—not, however, because they have gained a victory, but because they have betaken themselves to flight. At the very moment that we thought of shutting them up, and binding them in captivity to the obedience of the truth, they have turned about and got away from us—but how? By an open renunciation of their own principle. Look at the great majority of infidel and demi-infidel authors, and they concur in representing man as an accountable subject, and God as a judge and a lawgiver. Examine then the account which this subject has to render—and you will see, in characters too glaring to be resisted, that with the purest and most perfect individual amongst us, it is a wretched account of guilt and deficiency. What make you of this? Is the subject to rebel and disobey every hour, and the King, by a perpetual act of indulgence, to efface every character of truth and dignity from his government? Do this, and you depose the legislator from his throne. You reduce the sanctions of his law to a name and a mockery. You give the lie to your own speculation. You pull the fabric of his moral government to pieces—and you give a spectacle to angels which makes them weep compassion on your vanity—poor, pigmy, perishable man, prescribing a way to the Eternal, and bringing

down the high economy of Heaven to the standard of his convenience, and his wishes. This will never do. If there be any truth in the law of God over the creatures whom he has formed, and if that law we have trampled upon, we are amenable to its sentence. Ours is the dark and unsheltered state of condemnation—and if there be a single outlet or way of escaping, it cannot be such a way as will abolish the law, and degrade the Lawgiver—but it must be such a way as will vindicate and exalt the Deity—as will pour a tide of splendour over the majesty of his high attributes—and as in the sublime language of the prophet, who saw it from afar, will magnify his law, and make it honourable. To this way we are fairly shut up. It is our only alternative. It is offered to us in the Gospel of the New Testament. I am the way, says the Author of that Gospel, and by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. In the appointment of this Mediator—in his death, to make propitiation for the sins of the world—in his triumph over the powers of darkness—in the voice heard from the clouds of heaven, and issuing from the mouth of God himself, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—in the resistless argument of the Apostle, who declares God to be just,

and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—in the undoubted miracles which accompanied the preaching of this illustrious personage, and his immediate followers—in the noble train of prophecy, of which he was the object and the termination—in the choir of angels from heaven, who sung his entrance into the world—and in the sublime ascension from the grave, which carried him away from it—in all this we see a warrant and a security given to the work of our redemption in the New Testament, before which philosophy and all her speculations vanish into nothing. Let us betake ourselves to this way. Let us rejoice in being shut up unto it. It is passing, in fact, from death unto life—or, from our being under the law, which speaks tribulation and wrath to every soul of man that doeth evil, to being under the grace which speaks quietness and assurance for ever to all that repair to it. The Scripture hath concluded all to be under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

We now pass on from the school of natural religion to another school, possessing distinct features—and of which we conceive the most expressive designation to be, the school of Classi-

cal Morality. The lessons of this school are given to the public in the form of periodical essays, elaborate dissertations on the principles of virtue, eloquent and often highly interesting pictures of its loveliness and dignity, the charm that it imparts to domestic retirement, and its happy subservience to the peace, and order, and well-being of society. It differs from the former school in one leading particular. It does not carry in its speculations so distinct and positive a reference to the Supreme Being. It is true, that our duties to him are found to occupy a place in the catalogue of its virtues; but then the principle on which they are made to rest, is not the will of God, or obedience to his law. They are rather viewed as a species of moral accomplishment—the effect of which is to exalt and embellish the individual. They form a component part of what they call virtue—but if their virtue be looked upon in no other light than as the dress of the mind, we maintain, that in the act of admiring this dress, and of even attempting to put it on, you may stand at as great a distance from God, and he be as little in your thoughts, as in the tasteful choice of your apparel, for the dress and ornament of the body. The object of these writers is not to bring their readers under a sense of the dominion and au-

thority of God. The main principle of their morality, is not to please God, but to adorn man —to throw the splendour of virtue and accomplishment around him—to bring him up to what they call the end and the dignity of his being—to raise him to the perfection of his nature—and to rear a spectacle for the admiration of men and of angels, whom they figure to look down with rapture, from their high eminence, on the perseverance of a mortal in the career of worth, and integrity, and honour. This is all very fine. It makes a good picture—but what we insist upon is, that it is a fancy picture; that, without the limits of Christianity and its influence, you will not meet with a single family, or a single individual, to realize it—that the whole range of human experience furnishes no resemblance to it—and that it is as unlike to what we find among the men of the world, or in the familiar walks of society, as the garden of Eden is unlike the desolation of a pestilence. The representation is beautiful—but it is still more flattering than it is fair. It is a gaudy deception, and stands at as great a distance from the truth of observation, as it does from the truth of the New Testament. There is positively nothing like it in the whole round of human experience. It is the mere glitter of imagi-

nation. It may serve to throw a tinsel colouring over the pages of an ambitious eloquence —but with business and reality for our objects, we may describe the tour of many thousand families, or take our station for years in the market-place, and in our attempts to realize the picture which has been laid before us, we will be sure to meet with nothing but vanity, fatigue, and disappointment. Now, the question we have to put to the disciples of this school is, are they really sincere in this admiration of virtue? Is it a true process of sentiment within them? We are willing to share in their admiration, and to ascend the highest summit of moral excellence along with them. We join issue with them on their own principle, and coupling it with the obvious and undeniable fact of man's depravity, we shut them up unto the faith. Virtue is the idol which they profess to venerate—and this virtue, as it exists in their own conceptions, and figures in their own dissertations, they cannot find. In proportion to their regard for virtue, must be their disappointment at missing her—and when we witness the ardour of their sentiments, and survey the elegance of their high-wrought pictures, what must be the humiliation of these men, we think, when they look on the world around them, and contrast the

purity of their own sketches, with the vices and the degradation of the species. Grosser beings may be satisfied with the average morality of mankind—but if there be any truth in their high standard of perfection, or any sincerity in their aspirations after it, it is impossible that they can be satisfied. By one single step do we lead them from the high tone of academic sentiment, to the sober humility of the Gospel. Give them their time to expatiate on virtue, and they cannot be too loud or eloquent in her praises. We have only a single sentence to add to their description: The picture is beautiful, but on the whole surface of the world we defy them to fasten upon one exemplification—and by every grace which they have thrown around their idol, and every addition they have made to her loveliness, they have only thrown mankind at a distance more helpless and more irrecoverable from their high standard of duty and of excellence.

The tasteful admirer of eloquent description and beautiful morality, turns with disgust from those mortifying pictures of man, which abound in the New Testament. We only ask them to combine, with all this finery and eloquence, what has been esteemed as the best attribute

of a philosopher, respect for the evidence of observation. We ask them to look at man as he is, and compare him with man as they would have him to be. If they find that he falls miserably short of their ideal standard of excellence, what is this but making a principle of their own the instrument of shutting them up unto the faith of the Gospel, or, at least, shutting them up unto one of the most peculiar of its doctrines, the depravity of our nature, or the dismal ravage which the power of sin has made upon the moral constitution of the species. The doctrine of the academic moralist, so far from reaching a wound to the doctrine of the Apostle, gives an additional energy to all his sentiments. "My mind approves the things which are more excellent, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "But the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do."

But the faith of the Gospel does not stop here. It does not rest satisfied with shutting you up unto a belief of the fact of human depravity. That depravity it proposes to do away. It professes itself equal to the mighty achievement of rooting out the deeply seated corrup-

tion of our nature—of making us new creatures in Christ Jesus—of destroying the old man and his deeds, and bringing every rebellious movement within us under the dominion of a new and a better principle. If sincere in your admiration of virtue, you are shut up unto the only expedient for the re-establishment of virtue in the world. That expedient is the Spirit of God working in the heart of believers—quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and bringing into action the same mighty power which raised Jesus from the grave, for raising us who believe in Jesus to newness of life and of obedience. This is the process of sanctification laid before us in the New Testament. A wonderful process it undoubtedly is—but are we who walk in a world of mystery, who have had only a few little years to look about us, and are bewildered at every step amid the variety of his works and of his counsels, are we to reject a process because it is wonderful? Must no step, no operation of the mighty God be admitted, till it is brought under the dominion of our faculties?—and shall we who strut our little hour in the humblest of his mansions, prescribe a law to him whose arm is abroad upon all worlds, and whose eye can take in, at a single glance, the unmeasurable

fields of creation and providence? Be it as wonderful as it may—enough for us that it is made sure by the distinct and authentic testimony of heaven—and if, from the mouth of Jesus, who is heaven's messenger, we are told, that "unless a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom," it is our part submissively to acquiesce, and humbly to pray for it. Whatever repugnance others may feel to this part of the revealed counsels of God, those who look to a sublime standard of moral excellence, and sigh for the establishment of its authority in the world, ought to rejoice in it. It is the only remaining expedient for giving effect and reality to their own declamations, and they are fairly shut up unto it. Long have they tried to repair the disorders of a ruined world. Many an expedient has been fallen upon. Temples have been reared to science and to virtue—and from the lofty academic chair, the wisdom of this world has lifted its voice amid a crowd of listening admirers. For thousands of years, the unaided powers and principles of humanity, have done their uttermost—and tell us, ye advocates for the dignity of the species, the amount of their operation. If you refuse to answer, we shall answer for you—and do not hesitate to say, that mighty in promise, and wretched in accom-

plishment, you have positively done nothing—that all the wisdom of the schools, and all its vapouring demonstrations, have not had the least perceptible weight, when brought to bear upon the mass of human character, and human performance—that the corruption of the inner man has not yielded at all to your reasoning, and remains as unsubdued and as obstinate a principle as ever—that the power of depravity in the soul of man is beyond you—and that setting aside the real operation of Christianity in the hearts of individuals, and the surface dressing which the hand of legislation has thrown over the face of society, the human soul, if seen in its nakedness, would still be seen in all its original deformity—as strong in selfishness, as lawless in propensity, as devoted to sense and to time, as estranged from God, as unmindful of the obedience, and as indifferent to the reward and the inheritance of his children.

The machine has gone into disorder—and there is not a single power within the compass of the machinery itself that is able to repair it. You must do as you do in other cases—you must have recourse to some external application. The inefficacy of every tried expedient

shuts you up unto the only remaining one. Every human principle has been brought to bear upon it in vain, and we are shut up unto the necessity of some other principle that is beyond humanity, and above it. The Spirit of God, is that mighty principle. That Spirit which moved on the face of the waters, and made light, and peace, and beauty to emerge out of the wild war of nature and her elements, is the revealed agent of Heaven, for repairing the disorders of sin, and restoring the moral creation of God to health and to loveliness. It will create us anew unto good works. It will make us again after that image in which we were originally formed. It will sanctify us by the faith that is in Jesus. And by that mighty power whereby it is able to subdue all things unto itself, it will obtain the victory over that spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the first fruit of its operation—and to him who believes it is the satisfying pledge of its future triumphs. That body, which, left to itself, would have mouldered into fragments, is now in all the bloom of immortality, at the right hand of the everlasting throne. We have tried the operation of a thousand principles in vain. Let us repair to this, so great in promise, and

so mighty in performance. It has already achieved its wonders. It has wrought those miracles of faith and fortitude which, in the first ages of Christianity, threw a gleam of triumph over the horrors of martyrdom. It has given us displays of the great and the noble which are without example in history—and from the first moment of its operation in the world, it has been working in those unseen retirements of the cottage and the family, where the eye of the historian never penetrates. The admirers of virtue are fairly shut up unto the faith—for faith is the only avenue that leads to it. "To your faith add virtue," says the Apostle—and that you may be able to make the addition, the promise of the Spirit is given to them that believe.

We should now pass on to another school, the school of fine feeling and poetical sentiment. It differs from the former in this—that while the one, in its dissertations on virtue, carries you up to the principles of duty, the other paints and admires it as a tasteful exhibition of what is fair and lovely in human character. The one makes virtue its idol because of its rectitude; the other makes virtue its idol because of its beauty—and the process of reasoning by which

they are shut up unto the faith, is the same in both. Look at the actual state of the world, and you find that both the rectitude and the beauty are a-wanting, If you admire the one, and love the other, you are shut up unto the only expedient that is able to restore them—and that expedient is sanctioned by the truth of heaven, and has all the power of omnipotence employed in giving effect to the operation—the Spirit of God subduing all things unto itself—putting the law in our hearts, and writing it in our minds—and by bringing the soul of man under the influence of "whatsoever things are pure, or honest, or lovely, or of good report," creating a finer spectacle, and rearing a fairer and more unfading flower, than ever grew in the gardens of poetry.

The processes are so entirely similar, that we would not have made it the distinct object of your attention, had it not been for the sake of an argument in behalf of the faith, which may be addressed with great advantage to the literary and cultivated orders of society. There are few people of literary cultivation, who have not read a novel. In this fictitious composition, there are often one or two perfect characters that figure in the history, and delight the

imagination of the reader—and you are at last landed in some fairy scene of happiness and virtue, which it is quite charming to contemplate, and which you would like to aspire after—perhaps some interesting family in the bosom of which love, and innocence, and tranquillity, have fixed themselves—where the dark and angry passions never enter—where suspicion is unknown, and every eye meets another in the full glance of cordiality and affection—where charity reigns triumphant, and smiles beneficence and joy upon the humble cottages which surround it. Now this is very soothing, and very delightful. It makes you glad to think of it. The fancy swells with rapture, and the moral principle of our nature lends its full approbation to a scene so virtuous and so exemplary. So much for the dream of fancy. Let us compare it with the waking images of truth. Walk from Dan to Beersheba, and tell us, if without and beyond the operation of Gospel motives, and Gospel principles, the reality of life ever furnished you with a picture that is at all like the elegance and perfection of this fictitious history. Go to the finest specimen of such a family. Take your secret stand, and observe them in their more retired and invisible moments. It is not enough to pay them a cere-

monious visit, and observe them in the put on manners and holiday dress of general company. Look at them when all this disguise and finery are thrown aside. Yes, we have no doubt, that you will perceive some love, some tenderness, some virtue—but the rough and untutored honesty of truth compels us to say, that along with all this, there are at times mingled the bitterness of invective, the growlings of discontent, the harpings of peevishness and animosity, and all that train of angry, suspicious, and discordant feelings, which imbitter the heart of man, and make the reality of human life a very sober affair indeed, when compared with the high colouring of romance, and the sentimental extravagance of poetry.

Now, what do we make of all this? We infer, that however much we may love perfection, and aspire after it, yet there is some want, some disease in the constitution of man, which prevents his attainment of it—that there is a feebleness of principle about him—that the energy of his practice does not correspond to the fair promises of his fancy—and however much he may delight in an ideal scene of virtue and moral excellence, there is some lurking malignity in his

constitution, which, without the operation of that mighty power revealed to us in the Gospel, makes it vain to wish, and hopeless to aspire after it.

SERMON X.

ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

MARK II. 27.

"And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

THE first recommendation of the Sabbath is the place which it occupies in the decalogue. There was much of Jewish observancy swept away with the ruin of the national institutions. There was much of it designed for a temporary purpose, and which fell into disuse among the worshippers of God after that purpose was accomplished. A Christian of the present day, looks upon many of the most solemn services of Judaism in no other light than as fragments of a perishable ritual—nor does he ever think, that upon himself they have any weight

of personal obligation. But this does not hold true of all the duties and all the services of Judaism. There is a broad line of distinction between that part of it which is now broken up, and that part of it which still retains all the authority of a perpetual and immutable law. Point us out a single religious observance of the Hebrews that is now done away, and we are able to say of it, and of all the others which have experienced a similar termination, that they every one of them, lie without the compass of the ten commandments. They have no place whatever in that great record of duty which was graven on tables of stones, and placed within the holy of holies, under the mercy-seat. Now, how does the law of the Sabbath stand as to this particular? Does it lie within or without a limit so tangible, and forming so distinct and so noticeable a line of demarcation? We see it then standing within this record, of which all the other duties are of such general and such imperishable obligation. We meet with it in the interior of that hallowed ground, of which every other part is so sacred and so inviolable. We perceive it occupying its own conspicuous place in that register of duties, all of which have the substance and the irrevocable permanency of moral principle. On reading over

the other articles of this memorable code, we see all of them stamped with such enduring characters of obligation, as no time can wear away—and the law of the Sabbath taking its station in the midst of them, and enshrined on each side of it among the immutabilities of truth, and justice, and piety. It is true, that much of Judaism has now fallen into desuetude, and that many of its dearest and most distinguished solemnities are now regarded in no other light than as the obsolete and repealed observances of an antiquated ritual. But it is worthy of being well observed, that the whole of this work of demolition took place around and without the line of demarcation. We see no attempt whatever to violate the sanctity of the ground which this line encloses. We no where see any express or recorded incursion upon any one of the observances of the decalogue. We perceive an Apostle in the New Testament making his allusion to the fifth of these observances, and calling it the first commandment with promise—and by the very notice he bestows on the arrangement of the duties, are we given to understand, that no attempt had been made to disturb their order, or to depose any one of them from the place which had been assigned to it. We

should count it an experiment of the most fearful audacity, without the intimation of any act of repeal passed in the high legislature of heaven, to fly in the face of that Sabbath law, which stands enrolled among the items of so notable and so illustrious a document, —and nothing short of a formal and absolute recallment can ever tempt us to think, that the new dispensation of the Gospel has created so much as one vacancy in that register of duties, which bears upon the aspect of its whole history the impress of a revealed standard that is unalienable and everlasting. We cannot give up one article in that series of enactments which, in every one age of the Christian world, has been revealed as a code, not of ceremonial but of moral law. We cannot consent, but on the ground of some resistless and overbearing argument, to the mutilation of the integrity of this venerable record. We see throughout the whole line of the Jewish history, that it stood separate and alone; and that free from all the marks of national or local peculiarity, it bore upon it none of the frailty of the other institutions, but has been preserved and handed down to us an unchanged standard of duty for all generations. We see, at the very commencement of the Mosaic dispensation, how God

himself thought fit to signalize it—for, from the place where he stood, did he proclaim the ten commandments of the law, in the hearing of the assembled multitude—while every other enactment, whether moral or ceremonial, was conveyed to the knowledge of the people, through the medium of a human legislator. And we should feel that, in dethroning any one of the preceptive impositions of the decalogue from its authority over our practice, we were bidding defiance to the declared will of the Eternal; and resisting a voice which sounds as loudly and as impressively to our conscience, as the one that issued in thunder from the flaming top of Sinai, and scattered dismay among the thousands of Israel.

But, secondly, in the practice of the Christian world, the Sabbath has been moved forward by one day—and the remembrance to which it is now consecrated, is a different one from that of the creation of the world. For this change we can find no positive enactment—but we can quote the uncontrolled observation of it down from the period of the apostolical age. We are sure that a practice so early and so universal, could not have been introduced without the sanction of Heaven's inspired messengers.

And, mark the limit of that liberty which has been taken with the fourth commandment. It amounts to nothing more than the circumstantial change of a day. Had the early Christians felt themselves warranted to take more liberty, they would have taken it—for then was the time when Christianity took its determinate movement away from the practices of the old dispensation, and established all its distinctions as a religion of principle, and a religion of spiritual character. But widely as the one religion departed from the other, there never, in any one age of the church, has been a departure from the observance of a Sabbath, appropriated to the more solemn and peculiar exercises of piety. The change in the day goes to prove that Christianity is not a religion of mere days. But while it has abandoned one particular day, you find it transferring itself to another—and in the choice of that other it is guided by the affecting remembrance of an event, the contemplation of which is fitted to strengthen the faith, and to refresh the piety, and to waken the best and most religious feelings of those who are spiritually engaged in it. It commemorates the rise of the crucified Saviour from the grave—of him who is the first fruits of them who slept—of him who by that

Spirit which is committed to him, raises all those who are dead in trespasses and sins, to newness of life—of him who is the great agent of Heaven for repairing all the disorders and all the deformities of the moral world—of him by whom, as the Word of God, the universe was at first created, but who has since earned a more enduring title to the memory of Christians, by taking upon him that great scheme, in virtue of which, there are to emerge out of this ruined and rebellious province, a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. At the first creation of the world, the Spirit moved over the turbulence of its confused and jarring elements, and awoke them all to order and to harmony. When Adam fell, we know not what precise mischief it inflicted on the material world—but we know that the moral world went back again into a wild chaos of dark and disorderly rebellion—and the heart of man lost its obedience to the attractive influences of that great principle which can alone subdue it into harmonious accordancy with the law of God—and the resurrection of Christ from the grave was a mighty and essential step in the counsels of heaven for quelling all the violence of this elementary war,—"for unless I go away, the Comforter cannot come; but if I go to my

Father, I shall send him." And from the place which he now occupies, does the Spirit come down at the commission of the exalted Saviour, and he moves on the face of this spiritual chaos, and is ever and anon reclaiming some portion of a moral and renovated empire from the rugged domain of a world lying in wickedness. And the time is yet to come when this ever-renovating Spirit shall fulfil its conclusive triumph, by spreading an entire aspect of worth, and piety, and moral loveliness over the wide extent of a now sinful creation. And thus it is, that while the day of Sabbath has been changed, there is a most affecting remembrance which gives to the observation of Sabbath the full import and significancy of its original purpose—the remembrance of a new creation emerging from an old one—the animating view of life and immortality rising in splendour from the corruption of the grave—the contemplation of an ascended Saviour, who pours the promise of the Father on all his believing disciples—and working in them by the Spirit the graces of the new creature, prepares them for a welcome entrance into those regions, where sin is unknown, and where death is swallowed up in victory.

But, thirdly, in addition to the slight circum-

stantial change which has been made upon the Sabbath, and which we are sure no honest and enlightened Christian can ever construe into an entire and absolute repeal of the whole institution—there is a general change affecting every one of the ten commandments, but which was never so well understood till the new dispensation was fully and fairly ushered into the world. We do not mean to say, that the worthies of the Old Testament were utter strangers to that doctrine of grace on which the Spirit of God, working in larger measure on the minds of the Apostles, from the day of Pentecost, has poured so clear and so celestial a splendour. We believe that many Jews were, under the shadow of their types and their sacrifices, trained to the faith, and the humility, and the affectionate obedience of creatures who knew themselves to be incapable of perfect conformity to the law of God—and that, in the act of serving him, they stood on essentially the same footing of mercy to pardon and grace to help in the time of need, on which a spiritual Christian of the day now feels himself to be so firmly and so conclusively established. The change we are alluding to, then, did not take place at the first settlement of the new dispensation. It only came out at that time into more distinct exhibition; and it consists in

this; that whereas the direct and natural way of taking up the promulgated law of God, is to take it up as a law of works, and to labour at the performance of it on the understood condition of "This do, and ye shall live"—and as this condition has not been fulfilled by a single son or daughter of the species, then, unless some new arrangement of the matter between God and man had been entered into, life was forfeited by every one of us, and we should just have been what the New Testament tells us we actually are, anterior to our reception of the Gospel, the children of wrath, and under the full operation of the sentence, that "the soul which sinneth it shall die." Now, it would lead us away from our subject into a most interminable excursion, did we say all that might be pertinently and substantially said on the precise turn which the Gospel has given to the obligation of the law. Eternal life is no longer the wages of perfect obedience. It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The man who has faith to perceive the reality of this gift, lays hold of it, and rejoices in all the enlargement of conscious forgiveness, and in all the cordialities of a secure and confident reconciliation, with the God whom he had offended. But this faith does not set him loose from any one

of the duties of obedience. Had no other doctrine been proposed to the believer, than the single one of forgiveness through the redemption that is in the blood of Jesus, then we can conceive how the dawning of the Gospel faith might be a signal for the emancipation of the whole man from the restraints of moral obligation. But other doctrines have been proposed; and faith, which is neither more nor less than a reliance on the divine testimony, gives an equally honest and welcome admission to all the particulars of that testimony. It embraces all the particulars of God's communication—and such is the amplitude of its grasp, that though as a principle, it is single and undivided, and can be defined within the limits of a short sentence—yet grant us the existence of this principle, and then you grant us room enough, and provision enough for giving effect to every one of the lessons of revelation. When faith attaches itself to the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ, it will make him who possesses it, to walk before God without fear. When faith attaches itself to the doctrine, that "without holiness no man can see God, it makes him who possesses it, to "walk before God without fear, in righteousness and in holiness." When faith attaches itself to the doctrine, that unless ye do such and

such commandments, ye shall not inherit the kingdom of God, it makes him who possesses it, feel as constraining an urgency of personal interest in the work of keeping these commandments, as if the old covenant of works had got up again, and he behooved to ply his assiduous task for the rewards of perfect obedience. When faith attaches itself to the doctrine of every man receiving his award at the judgment-seat, according to the deeds done in the body, it makes him who possesses it just strive with as much earnestness to multiply good deeds—as if each performance done at the bidding of the Saviour, was a distinct addition to the treasure reserved for him in heaven. But faith does attach itself to every one of these doctrines, or it is no faith at all. It gives the homage of its reliance to each particular of the law and the testimony. It clears its unfettered way from among the perplexities of human arrangement; and disowning every authority but that of the one master, it sits at his feet with the docility of a little child, and appropriates to its right influence every item of his communications. And thus it is, that the man who is in simplicity and in good faith a believer, while he rejoices all the day long in the sunshine of a countenance which he knows to be friendly to him,

labours all the day long at his faithful and assiduous task of doing every thing to the glory of God. There is room enough in his enlarged heart for knowing, that while the one is his offered privilege, the other is his required duty—and free, as he is, from all the embroilments of a darkening speculation, he does not wait for the adjustment of any human controversy on the subject, but taking himself to his Bible, he both lives in all the security of the offered reconciliation, and without questioning the simple announcement of the Saviour, that "if ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," he also lives in all the diligence of one who is "steadfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

It is true, that there is a difference between being under the law, and under grace. But how does this difference affect the morality of a Christian? Let us take the deliverance of an Apostle upon the subject. "Shall we sin," says Paul, "because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Quite the contrary, for it is precisely because we are under grace, that sin hath not dominion over us. We must shorten this explanation, and bring it to bear on the observation of the Sabbath,

The great interest of practical obedience is upheld under the dispensation of the Gospel, by all the securities of positive and preceptive obligation. But more than this—there is such a change wrought by grace in the heart of every believer, that he not only understands the obligation, but is made cordially to acquiesce in it. There is such a revolution in his desires, that it is now his meat and drink to do the will of that God, against whom there existed within him the most stubborn and revolting enmity. The man, who, by faith, now looks on God as his friend, will have no difficulty in understanding this change, for he feels it—and there is not a believer on the face of the earth who does not, from the time of his becoming so, love that law which he aforetime violated. This law was at first graven on tables of stone, and held out for the government of a helpless and guilty race, who were both unable and unwilling to yield to it the loyalty of their obedience; and it therefore served to them for a ministry of condemnation. When the dispensation of grace was brought in, this law was not abrogated. One of the most illustrious exercises of the grace of God, consisted in his putting forth a device for securing the observance of his laws, and this device is neither more nor less than

putting the law in our hearts, and writing it in our minds. On the change taking place from our being under the law, to our being under grace, the law, to use the language of the Bible, is taken down from the place it formerly occupied on tablets of stone, and from which it frowns upon us in all the wrath of its violated dignity; and it is graven on the fleshly tablets of the heart—or, in other words, the man is endowed with a liking for that which he formerly rebelled against. And grant him possessed of the genuine principle of faith; and there can be no doubt, that the spirit, true to his office, has been at work within him, and has given a new bent to his affections, and has turned them to the love of those commandments, which he aforetime hated and resisted, and has established in his bosom this omnipotent security for obedience, that the taste and the inclinations of the new creature, are new upon its side; and as if carried forward by the spontaneous and inborn alacrity of a constitutional impulse, does the man who is thus transformed, and thus acted upon by that Spirit, for which he never ceases to pray, run with delight in the way of all the commandments.

Now, we have already attempted to satisfy

you, that there is no erazure of the fourth commandment from that lettered record of the law, which is met with in your Bibles, and where the institution of the Sabbath is graven as indelibly as any one of the unchangeable moralities, among which it is situated. But by the new dispensation of the Gospel, this law is made to stand in another place. It is conveyed, as it were, from its old position, on a tablet of stone, and written in the characters of a living epistle on the tablet of a believer's heart. Now the question we have to put is, in this transference of the law from its old to its new repository, does any one of its articles fall away from it, and is lost, as it were, in the passage, by being loosened and detached from the other articles, among which it was incorporated? We can specify some, at least, of the ten commandments, which have found their way safe and entire to the heart of him who has embraced the Gospel, and lives under the power of its purifying influences. We are sure, that such a man will have his supreme affections fastened upon God, and renouncing every idol whether of wealth, or of ambition, or of vanity, that can dethrone the Father of his spirit from his rightful ascendancy, he will prefer no one object of regard, or of reverence before him. We are sure,

that such a man will be quite in earnest to have a right knowledge and conception of God—that the Being he worships may be the true God—and lest, by directing his homage to some false and distorted picture of his own fancy, he may incur all the guilt, and be carried away by all the delusion of him who falls down to a material image, in lowly and bending adoration. We are sure that such a man will do honour to the hallowed name of his Master, who is in heaven, and be sickened and appalled by that profaneness which is so current in many of our companies. We are sure that such a man will revere his earthly parents, and will stand by them in the midst of their sinking infirmities; and whether in the form of a declining father, or a widowed mother, who has thrown the whole burden of her dependance on the children who remain to her, we are sure that he will never turn a contemptuous ear to the feebleness of their entreating voice—but will bid his proud and aspiring manhood give up to their authority all its waywardness, and all its tumultuous independence. We are quite sure, that in the heart of such a man, there is an aspiration of kindliness toward every thing that breathes, and that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" carries in his bosom the widely extended import of thou

shalt not conceive one purpose, nor carry against a single human being, one rankling sentiment of malignity. We are sure, that such a man, far removed from all that is licentious in practice, will recoil, even in the unseen solitude of thought, from all that is licentious in conception, and spurning away from the pure sanctuary of his heart every evil and unhallowed visitation, he will present to the approving eye of Heaven, all the adornments of a spiritual temple, all the graces and all the beauties of an unspotted offering. We are sure, that such a man, with a hand unsoiled by any one of the gains of injustice, will, with all the sensitiveness of high-minded and honourable principle, keep himself as nobly aloof from substantial as from literal dishonesty. He will feel superior to every one of those tolerated artifices, and those practical disguises, which, throughout the great mass of mercantile society, have so hardened and so worn down the consciences of those, who for years, have been speeding and bustling their way amongst a variety of manifold transactions—and in the high walk of simplicity and godly sincerity, will he carry along with him the impress of one of the peculiar people, amid all the legalized fraudulency of a selfish and unprincipled generation. We are quite sure, that

such a man, seeing he had put on the deeds of the new creature, would never suffer the burning infamy of a lie to rest upon him. All that was within him, and about him, would be clear as the ethereal firmament. The wiles of a deceitful policy would be utterly unknown to him. The openness and the ingenuousness of truth, would sit upon his forehead, and his every utterance bear upon it as decided a stamp of authority, as if shielded by a solemn appeal to God and to the judgment-seat. And, lastly, we are quite sure, that such a man could not breathe a single avaricious desire after the substance of another. His heart is set on another treasure. He has entered the service of another master than the mammon of unrighteousness. His affections have settled on a more enduring substance. With the eye of faith, he looks to heaven, and to its unfading and unperishable riches; and all the splendours of this world's vain and empty magnificence, sink into worthlessness before them. He can eye the golden career of his more prosperous neighbours, without one wistful sentiment either of covetousness or of envy; and feels not the meanness and the hardships of his humbler condition, amid the tranquillites of a heart that is cherishing a better prospect, and reposing on the sure anticipation of a happier and more enduring home.

Well, then, in the heart of this man, of whom we suppose nothing more than that he has drunk in the genius of our better dispensation, we find graven in the most legible and distinct characters, nine of the commandments. We meet with all the ten in the letter of the Old Testament, and we find nine out of these ten in a state of most vigorous and entire operation, under the Spirit of the New Testament. What has become of the fourth commandment? Has it sunk and disappeared under the stormy vicissitudes of that middle passage, through which all the rest have found their way, from the tablets of a literal inscription, and have gotten their secure and unviolable lodgment within the tablet of a Christian heart? If we look into that heart, do we meet with no trace of the commandment we are in quest of? Will you tell us, that the law of the Sabbath is erazed, we will not say from the remembrance, but from the affection of any one of the actual Christians by whom you are surrounded? Has it left behind it a vacancy in that spiritual tablet which is graven by the Spirit of God, when he writes the law in the believer's heart, and puts it into his mind? This is a question of observation—and speaking from our own observation, we never, in the whole round of it, met with a man,

drawn by the cords of love to the doing of the other commandments, and carrying in his heart either a distaste or an indifference for the fourth of them? We may have seen men high in honour, and earning by their integrity the rewards of an unsullied reputation amongst their fellow-citizens, carrying a visible contempt for the Sabbath law throughout the whole line of their Sabbath-history—but all the truth and all the justice of these men are such constitutional virtues as may exist in a character which owns not, and feels not the power of godliness—and sure we are, that wanting this power, several of the other commandments can be specified, to which they are as utter strangers as to the commandment of the seventh day. We repeat it, therefore, that if you grant us a man who bears about with him in his bosom, a warm and conscientious attachment to all the articles of the decalogue but this one, before we look at him, we say with confidence, that search him, and both in his heart and in his practice, this one is to be found—and that we shall not fail to meet the Sabbath law as firmly established as any other within the secrecies of his bosom, and standing out as conspicuously on the front of his external observations. We never, in the whole course of our recollections, met with a

Christian friend, who bore upon his character every other evidence of the Spirit's operation, who did not remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. We appeal to the memory of all the worthies who are now lying in their graves, that eminent as they were in every other grace and accomplishment of the new creature, the religiousness of their Sabbath-day shone with an equal lustre amid the fine assemblage of virtues which adorned them. In every Christian household, it will be found, that the discipline of a well-ordered Sabbath is never forgotten amongst the other lessons of a Christian education—and we appeal to every individual who now hears us, and who carries the remembrance in his bosom of a father's worth, and a father's piety, if on the coming round of the seventh day, an air of peculiar sacredness did not spread itself over that mansion, where he drew his first breath, and was taught to repeat his infant hymn, and lisp his infant prayer. Rest assured, that a Christian, having the love of God written in his heart, and denying the Sabbath a place in its affections, is an anomaly that is no where to be found. Every Sabbath image, and every Sabbath circumstance, is dear to him. He loves the quietness of that hallowed morn. He loves the church-bell sound, which summons him to

the house of prayer. He loves to join the chorus of devotion, and to sit and listen to that voice of persuasion which is lifted in the hearing of an assembled multitude. He loves the retirement of this day from the din of worldly business, and the inroads of worldly men. He loves the leisure it brings along with it—and sweet to his soul is the exercise of that hallowed hour, when there is no eye to witness him but the eye of heaven—and when in solemn audience with the Father, who seeth him in secret, he can, on the wings of celestial contemplation, leave all the cares, and all the vexations, and all the secularities of an alienated world behind him. O how is it possible, that a man can be under the dominion of a principle of piety, who does not love that day which brings round to piety its most precious opportunities? How is it possible, that he can wear the character of a religious being, if the very day which offers him the freest time for the lessons and the exercises of religion, is spent in other exercises, or idly suffered to roll over his head in no exercise at all? How is it possible, that there can exist within him any honest care of his eternity, if the best season for carrying on, without disturbance, the preparations of eternity, pass away in disgust and in weariness? How is it possible,

with all the tenderness of his instinctive nature for the members of his family, that there can be one particle of tenderness for their souls, if this day run on at large from all the restraints of Christian discipline, and careless parents giving themselves up to neglect and to indolence, make no effort to reclaim the wild ignorance of children, untaught and untrained to that wisdom which is unto salvation? The thing is not to be conceived; and upon the strength of all these impossibles, do we assert, that every real Christian has the love of the Sabbath engraven on the tablet of the inner man—that if you had a window to his bosom, you would there see the fourth commandment filling up as large a space of that epistle, which is written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, as it does on the decalogue of Moses—that this is not the peculiarity of some accidental Christians, meeting our observation on some random walk over the face of Christian society—that it is the constant and universal attribute of all Christians—that in every age of the church the love of the Sabbath, and an honest delight in all its pious and profitable observances, have ever stood out among the visible lineaments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord—that the great Spirit, whose office it is to inscribe the law of

God on the hearts of those whose sins are forgiven them, and whom he has admitted into the privileges of his new and his better covenant, has never omitted, in a single instance, to make the remembrance of the Sabbath one of the most conspicuous, and one of the most indelible articles of that inscription. And thus has it happened, that without any statutory enactment in the whole compass of the New Testament upon the subject—without any formal setting forth of Sabbath observation, or any laying down of a Sabbath ceremonial, the grave, the solemn, the regular, and with all this, the affectionate keeping of this distinguished day, has come down to us through a series of eighteen centuries, and may be recognized to this hour as the ever present badge of every Christian individual—and as the great index and palladium of religion in every Christian land.

We shall just say one thing more upon this subject at present. What now becomes of him, who, like a special pleader, with a statute book in his hand, thinks that the New Testament has set him at large from every one style of Sabbath observation, because he cannot find in it any laying down of Sabbath observances? He will not own the force of any obligation till it be

shown to him as one of the clauses in the bond. His constant appeal is to the bond. He will not exceed, by a single inch, the literalities of the bond. He will square his every service, and his every offering by the bond—and when he is charged with any one of the misdemeanours of Sabbath-breaking, he will tell you that it is not specified in the bond. Why, my brethren, if the bond be what he stands upon, he just wakens up against himself the old ministry of condemnation. If it be on the just and even footing of the bond, that he chooses to have his exactly literal dealings with God, on this footing God will enter into judgment with him—and soon, and very soon, will he convict him of his glaring deficiencies from his own favourite standard the bond. Ah, my brethren, when a Christian serves his reconciled Father, it is the service of a liberal and spontaneous attachment. His aim is to please him and to glorify him to the uttermost; and he is never more delighted than when it is in his power to offer the God whom he loves, some of those substantial testimonies of affection which no jealousy can extort by any of its enactments, and the letter of no law is able to embody in any of its descriptions. With such a spirit, and such a cordiality within, we cannot doubt for a moment the delight which

such a man will take in the Sabbath, and how dear to his bosom will the affecting remembrance be to which it is consecrated—and how diligently he will cultivate its every hour to the purpose for which it was made—and how, knowing that the Sabbath was made for man, he will earnestly and honestly give himself to the task of realizing all its usefulness to himself and to his family. And do you think, that God will not see this? Do you think, that he will stand in need of any literal specifications by which he may mark the character of this man on the day of retribution? Will he not be able to read that epistle which he himself has engraven on the fleshly tablets of his heart? Will he not know his own? Will he not recognize all the lineaments of that new creature, which has been fashioned by his own spirit—and on that day when the secrets of every heart are laid open, will not the Sabbath observations of an honest and affectionate believer, flowing, as they do, from the impulses of a love for that law which is written on his mind, be put down among those good deeds which shall be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the solemn reckoning of the judgment seat?

SERMON XI.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION.

ACTS XXVII. 22, 31.

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

THE comparison of these two verses lands us in what may appear to many to be a very dark and unprofitable speculation. Now, our object in setting up this comparison, is not to foster in any of you a tendency to meddle with matters too high for us—but to protect you against the practical mischief of such a tendency. You have all heard of the doctrine of predestination. It has long been a settled article of our church. And there must be a sad deal of evasion and of unfair handling with particular passages, to get free of the evidence which we find for it in the

Bible. And independently of Scripture altogether, the denial of this doctrine brings a number of monstrous conceptions along with it. It supposes God to make a world, and not to reserve in his own hand the management of its concerns. Though it should concede to him an absolute sovereignty over all matter, it deposes him from his sovereignty over the region of created minds, that far more dignified and interesting portion of his works. The greatest events in the history of the universe, are those which are brought about by the agency of willing and intelligent beings—and the enemies of the doctrine invest every one of these beings with some sovereign and independent principle of freedom, in virtue of which it may be asserted of this whole class of events, that they happened, not because they were ordained of God, but because the creatures of God, by their own uncontrolled power, brought them into existence. At this rate, even he to whom we give the attribute of omniscience, is not able to say at this moment, what shall be the fortune or the fate of any individual—and the whole train of future history is left to the wildness of accident. All this, carries along with it so complete a dethronement of God—it is bringing his creation under the dominion of so many

nameless and undeterminable contingencies—it is taking the world and the current of its history so entirely out of the hands of him who formed it—it is withal so opposite to what obtains in every other field of observation, where, instead of the lawlessness of chance, we shall find that the more we attend, the more we perceive of a certain necessary and established order—that from these and other considerations which might be stated, the doctrine in question, in addition to the testimonies which we find for it in the Bible, is at this moment receiving a very general support from the speculations of infidel as well as Christian philosophers.

Assenting, as we do, to this doctrine, we state it as our conviction, that God could point the finger of his omniscience to every one individual amongst us, and tell what shall be the fate of each, and the place of each, and the state of suffering or enjoyment of each at any one period of futurity, however distant. Well does he know those of us who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and those of us whom he has predestinated to be conformed to the image of his dear Son, and to be rendered meet for the inheritance. We are not saying, that we, or that any of you could so cluster and arrange the two

sets of individuals. This is one of the secret things which belong to God. It is not our duty to be altogether silent about the doctrine of predestination—for the Bible is not silent about it, and it is our duty to promulgate and to hold up our testimony for all that we find there. But certain it is, that the doctrine has been so injudiciously meddled with—it has tempted so many ingenious and speculative men to transgress the limits of Scripture—it has engendered so much presumption among some, and so much despondency among others—it has been so much abused to the mischief of practical Christianity, that it were well for us all, could we carefully draw the line between the secret things which belong to God, and the things which are revealed, and belong to us and to our children.

With this view, we shall, in the first place, lay before you the observations which are suggested by the immediate history in the passage now submitted to you. And in the second place, we shall attempt to evince its application to us of the present day, and in how far it should carry an influence over the concerns of practical godliness.

I. In the 22d verse Paul announces in absolute terms, that all the men of the ship were to be saved. He had been favoured with this intimation from the mouth of an angel. It was the absolute purpose of God, and no obstacle whatever could prevent its accomplishment. To him belongs that knowledge which sees every thing, and that power which determines every thing; and he could say to his prophet, "These men will certainly be saved." Compare this with what we have in the 31st verse. By this time the sailors had given up all hope of the safety of the vessel. They had toiled, as they thought, in vain—and in despair of doing any good, they ceased from working the ship, and resolved to abandon her. With this view, they let down the boat to try the chance of deliverance for themselves, and leave the passengers to perish. Upon this Paul, though his mind had been previously assured, by an intimation from the foreknowledge and predestination of God, that there should be no loss of men's lives, put on all the appearance of earnestness and urgency—and who can doubt, that he really felt this earnestness at the moment of his speaking to the centurion, when he told him, that unless these men should abide in the ship, they would not be saved? He had before told them,

in the most unrestricted terms, that they would be saved. But this does not restrain his practical urgency now—and the urgency of Paul gave an alarm and a promptitude to the mind of the centurion—and the centurion ordered his soldiers to cut the ropes which fastened the boat to the vessel, that the sailors, deprived of this mode of escape, might be forcibly detained among them—and the soldiers obeyed—and the sailors were kept on board, and rendered the full benefit of their seamanship and their exertions. They did what other passengers could not do. They lightened the ship. They took up the anchors. They loosed the rudder-bands. They hoised up the mainsail to the wind—and the upshot of this long intermediate process, with all its steps, was, that the men escaped safe to land, and the decree of God was accomplished.

Now, in the first instance, it was true, in the most absolute sense of the word, that these men were to be saved. And in the second instance, it was no less true, that unless the sailors abode in the ship, they could not be saved. And the terms of this apparent contradiction admit of a very obvious reconciliation on the known truth, that God worketh by instruments.

He may carry every one purpose of his into immediate accomplishment by the direct energy of his own hands. But, in point of fact, this is not his general way of proceeding. He chooses rather to arrive at the accomplishment of many of his objects by a succession of steps, or by the concurrence of one or more visible instruments, which require time for their operation. This is a truth to which all nature and all experience lend their testimony. It was his purpose that, at the moment I am now addressing you, there should be light over the face of the country, and this purpose he accomplishes by the instrumentality of the sun. There is a time coming, when light shall be furnished out to us in another way—when there shall be no need either of the sun or the moon to lighten the city of our habitation—but when the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. But this is not the way at present, and, therefore, it is both true, that it was God's purpose there should be light over us and around us at this moment, and that unless the sun had risen upon us this morning, there would have been no such light. It may be the purpose of God to bless the succeeding year with a plentiful harvest. He could accomplish this purpose in two ways. He could make the

ripened corn start into existence by a single word of his power. But this is not the actual way in which he carries such designs into accomplishment. He does it by the co-operation of many visible instruments. It is true, he can pour abundance among us even in the midst of adverse weather and unfavourable seasons. But he actually does it by means of favourable weather and favourable seasons. It is not in spite of bad weather that we receive from his hands the blessings of plenty—but in consequence of good weather—sunshine and shower succeeding each other in fit proportion—calm to prevent the shaking of the corn, and wind in sufficient quantity to winnow it and make a prosperous ingathering. Should it be the purpose of God to give a plentiful harvest to us next year, it will certainly happen, and yet it may be no less true, that unless such weather come, we shall have no plentiful harvest. God, who appoints the end, orders and presides over the whole series of means which lead to it. These visible causes are all in his hand. They are the instruments of his power. The elements are his, and he can either restrain their violence, or let them loose in fury upon the world.

Now, look upon human beings as the in-

struments of his pleasure, and you have an equally complete explanation of the passage before us. You will be made to understand how it is true, that it was God's absolute purpose that the men of the vessel should be saved, and how it is equally true, that unless the sailors abode in the ship, they could not be saved. Why, the same God who determined the end, gave certain efficacy to the means which he himself had instituted and set agoing for the accomplishment of the end. It does not at all affect the certainty of God's influence over these means, that, in addition to wind, and water, and material elements, there were also human beings employed as instruments for carrying his purpose into execution. It is expressly said of God, not only that he stilleth the waves of the sea, but that he also stilleth the tumults of the people, and that he can turn the heart of man as the rivers of water, turning it whithersoever he will. He appoints the end, and it does not at all lessen the sure and absolute nature of the appointment, that he brings it about by a long succession of means, provided that it is his power which gives effect to every step in the progress and operation of these means. Now, in the case before us, there was just such a progress as we pointed out in the case of a favourable harvest. He had

determined, that all the men of the vessel should be saved; but agreeably to the method of his administration in other cases, he brought it about by the operation of instruments. He did not save them against the use of instruments, but he did it by the use of instruments. The instruments he employed were men. Paul speaking to the centurion—the centurion ordering the soldiers to cut the ropes, and let the boat away from the vessel—the sailors obliged to work for their own safety—these were the instruments of God, and he had as much command over them as of any others he has created. He brought about the saving of the men by means of those instruments, as certainly as he brings about a good harvest by the instrument of favourable weather, and congenial seasons. He is as much master of the human heart and its determinations, as he is of the elements. He reigns in the mind of man, and can turn its purposes in any way that suits his purposes. He made Paul speak. He made the centurion listen and be impressed by it. He made the soldiers obey. He made the sailors exert themselves. The conditional assertion of the 31st verse was true—but he made the assertion serve the purpose for which it was uttered. He overruled the condition, and brought about the ful-

filment of the absolute prophecy in the 22d verse. The whole of this process was as completely overruled by him as any other process in nature—and in virtue too of the very same power by which he can cause the wind of heaven to fly loose upon the world, make the rain descend, the corn ripen into harvest, and all the blessings of plenty sit in profusion over a happy and a favoured land.

There is no inconsistency then between these verses. God says in one of them, by the mouth of Paul, that these men were certainly to be saved. And Paul says in the other of these verses, that unless the centurion and soldiers were to do so and so they should not be saved. In one of the verses, it is made to be the certain and unfailing appointment of God. In the other it is made to depend on the centurion. There is no difficulty in all this, if you would just consider, that God, who made the end certain, made the means certain also. It is true, that the end was certainly to happen, and it is as true that the end would not have happened without the means—but God secured the happening of both, and so gives sureness and consistency to the passage before us.

Now, it is worth while to attend here both to the conduct of Paul who gave the directions, and to the conduct of the centurion who obeyed them. Paul, who gave the directions, knew, in virtue of the revelation that was made to him some time before, that the men were certainly to be saved, and yet this does not prevent him from urging them to the practical adoption of means for saving themselves. He knew that their being saved was a thing predestinated, and as sure as the decree of heaven could make it; but he must likewise have known, that while it was God's counsel they should be saved, it was also God's will that they should be saved by the exertions of the sailors—that they were the instruments he made choice of—that this was the way in which he wished it to be brought about—and Paul had too high a reverence for the will of God, to decline the use of those practical expedients, which formed the likeliest way of carrying this will into effect. It is a very striking circumstance, that the same Paul who knew absolutely and unequivocally that the men were to be saved, could also say, and say with truth, that unless the sailors were detained in the ship, they should not be saved. Both were true, and both were actually brought about. The thing was done by the appointment of

God, and it was also done by a voluntary act on the part of the centurion and his soldiers. Paul knew of the appointment, but he did not feel himself exempted by this knowledge, from the work of practically influencing the will of the people who were around him; and the way in which he got them to act, was by bringing the urgency of a prevailing argument to bear upon them. He told them that their lives depended upon it. God put it into Paul's heart to make use of the argument, and he gave it that influence over the hearts of those to whom it was addressed, that by the instrumentality of men, his purpose, conceived from eternity, and revealed beforehand to the Apostle, was carried forward to its accomplishment.

And again, as the knowledge that they were to be saved, did not prevent Paul from giving directions to the centurion and soldiers for saving themselves, neither did it prevent them from a practical obedience to these directions. It does not appear whether they actually at this time believed Paul to be a messenger of God—though it is likely, from the previous history of the voyage, that they did. If they did not, then they acted as the great majority of men do, they acted as unconscious instruments for the execu-

tion of the divine purposes. But if they did believe Paul to be a prophet, it is highly striking to observe, that the knowledge they had gotten from his mouth of their really and absolutely escaping with their lives, did not slacken their utmost degree of activity in the business of working for the preservation of their lives, at a bidding from the mouth of the same prophet. He is a prophet from God—and whatever he says must be true. He tells us we are to escape with our lives—let us believe this and rejoice in it. But he also tells us, that unless we do certain things, we shall not escape with our lives—let us believe this also, and do these things. A fine example, on the one hand, of their faithful dependence on his declarations, and, on the other, of their practical obedience to his requirements. If one were to judge by the prosperous result of the whole business, the way in which the centurion and soldiers were affected by the different revelations of Paul, was the very way which satisfied God—for it was rewarded with success, and issued both in the fulfilment of his decree, and the completion of their deliverance.

II. We now come to the second thing proposed, which was to evince the application of

the passage to us of the present day—and how far it should carry an influence over the concerns of practical godliness.

We shall rejoice in the first instance, if the explanation we have now given, have the effect of clearing away any of those perplexities which throw a darkening cloud over the absolute and universal sovereignty of God. We are ready enough to concede to the Supreme Being the administration of the material world, and to put into his hand all the force of its mighty elements. But let us carry the commanding influence of Deity into the higher world of moral and intelligent beings. Let us not erect the will of the creature into an independent principle. Let us not conceive that the agency of man can bring about one single iota of deviation from the plans and the purposes of God—or that he can be thwarted and compelled to vary in a single case, by the movement of any of those subordinate beings whom he himself has created. There may be a diversity of operations, but it is God who worketh all in all. Look at the resolute and independent man, and you there see the purposes of the human mind entered upon with decision, and followed up by vigorous and successful exertion. But these only make up

one diversity of God's operations. The will of man, active, and spontaneous, and fluctuating as it appears to be, is an instrument in his hand —and he turns it at his pleasure—and he brings other instruments to act upon it—and he plies it with all its excitements—and he measures the force and proportion of each of them—and every step of every individual receives as determinate a character from the hand of God, as every mile of a planet's orbit, or every gust of wind, or every wave of the sea, or every particle of flying dust, or every rivulet of flowing water. This power of God knows no exceptions. It is absolute and unlimited, and while it embraces the vast, it carries its resistless influence to all the minute and unnoticed diversities of existence. It reigns and operates through all the secrecies of the inner man. It gives birth to every purpose. It gives impulse to every desire. It gives shape and colour to every conception. It wields an entire ascendancy over every attribute of the mind; and the will, and the fancy, and the understanding, with all the countless variety of their hidden and fugitive operations, are submitted to it. It gives movement and direction through every one point in the line of our pilgrimage. At no one moment of time does it abandon us. It follows

us to the hour of death, and it carries us to our place and our everlasting destiny in the region beyond it. It is true, that no one gets to heaven, but he, who by holiness, is meet for it. But the same power which carries us there, works in us the meetness. And if we are conformed to the image of the Saviour, it is by the energy of the same predestinating God, whose good pleasure it is to give unto us the kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world.

Thus it is that some are elected to everlasting life. This is an obvious doctrine of Scripture. The Bible brings it forward, and it is not for us, the interpreters of the Bible, to keep it back from you. God could, if it pleased him, read out at this moment, the names of those in this congregation, who are ordained to eternal life, and are written in his book. In reference to their deliverance from shipwreck, he enabled Paul to say of the whole ship's company, that they were to be saved. In reference to your deliverance from wrath and from punishment, he could reveal to us the names of the elect among you, and enable us to say of them that they are certainly to be saved.

But again, the same God who ordains the end, ordains also the means which go before it. In virtue of the end being ordained and made known to him, Paul could say that all the men's lives were to be saved. And in virtue of the means being ordained and made known to him, he could also say, that unless the sailors abode in the ship, they should not be saved. In the same manner, if the ordained end were made known to us, we could, perhaps, say of some individual among you, that you are certainly to be saved. And if the ordained means were made known to us, we could say, that unless you are rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, you shall not be saved. Now the ordination of the end God has not been pleased to reveal to us. He has not told us who among you are to be saved, as he told Paul of the deliverance of his ship's company. This is one of the secret things which belong to him, and we dare not meddle with it. But he has told us about the ordained means, and we know, through the medium of the Bible, that unless you do such and such things, you shall not be saved. This is one of the revealed things which belong to us, and with as great truth and practical urgency as Paul made use of, when he said to the centurion and soldiers, that unless these

men abide in the ship ye shall not be saved, do we say to one and to all of you, unless ye repent ye shall not be saved—unless ye do works meet for repentance, ye shall not be saved—unless ye believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, ye shall not be saved—unless ye are born again, ye shall not be saved—unless the deeds done in your body be good deeds, and ye bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God, ye shall not be saved.

Mark the difference between the situation of Paul urging upon the people of the ship the immediate adoption of the only way by which their lives could be saved, and the situation of an ordinary minister urging it upon the people of his church, to take to that way of faith and repentance, by which alone they can save their souls from the wrath that is now abiding on them. Paul did know that the people were certainly to escape with their lives, and that did not prevent him from pressing upon them the measures which they ought to adopt for their preservation. Even then, though a minister did know those of his people whose names are written in the book of life, that ought not to hinder him from pressing it upon them to lay hold of

eternal life—to lay up their treasure in heaven—to labour for the meat that endureth—to follow after that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord—to be strong in the faith, and such a faith too as availeth, even faith which worketh by love, and of which we may say, even to those whom we assuredly know to be the chosen heirs of immortality, that unless this faith abideth in them, they shall not be saved. But it so happens, that we do not know who are, and who are not, the children of election. This is a secret thing belonging to God, and which is not imparted to us. Even though it were imparted to us, still it would be our part to say to those of whose final salvation we were assured, believe the Gospel, or you shall not be saved—repent, or you shall not be saved—purify yourselves even as God is pure, or you shall not be saved. But we are not in possession of the secret—and how much more then does it lie upon us to ply with earnestness the fears and the consciences of our hearers, by those revealed things which God hath been pleased to make known to us? What! if Paul, though assured by an angel from heaven of the final deliverance of his ship's company, still persists in telling them, that if they leave certain things undone, their deliverance will be impossible—shall we, utterly in the

dark about the final state of a single hearer we are addressing, let down for a single instant the practical urgency of the New Testament? The predestination of God respecting the final escape of Paul and his fellow-travellers from shipwreck, though made known to the Apostle, did not betray him into the indolence which is ascribed, and falsely ascribed, to the belief of this doctrine; nor did it restrain him from spiriting on the people to the most strenuous and fatiguing exertions. And shall we, who only know in general that God does predestinate, but cannot carry it home with assurance to a single individual, convert this doctrine into a plea of indolence and security? Even should we see the mark of God upon their foreheads, it would be our duty to labour them with the necessity of doing those things, which, if left undone, will exclude from the kingdom of God. But, we make no such pretensions. We see no mark upon any of your foreheads. We possess no more than the Bible, and access through the Mediator to him, who, by his Spirit, can open our understandings to understand it. The revealed things which we find there belong to us, and we press them upon you—"Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "If ye believe not in the Son of God, the wrath of

God abideth on you." "Be not deceived, neither covetous, nor thieves, nor extortioners, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "He who forsaketh not all, shall not be a disciple of Christ." "The fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." These are plain declarations, and apart from the doctrine of predestination altogether, they ought, and if they are believed and listened to, they will have a practical influence upon you. We call upon you not to resist this influence, but to cherish it. If any of you are the children of election, it is by the right influence of revealed things upon your understandings and your consciences, that this secret thing will be brought to pass. Paul said as much to the centurion and the soldiers, as that if you do the things I call upon you to do, you will certainly be saved. They did what he bade them, and the decree of God respecting their deliverance from shipwreck, a decree which Paul had the previous knowledge of, was accomplished. We also feel ourselves warranted to say to one and to all of you, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." "Repent and be converted, and your sins shall be forgiven you." Return

unto God, and he will be reconciled. If you do as we bid you, God's decree respecting your deliverance from hell, a decree which we have not the previous knowledge of, will be made known by its accomplishment.

Again, we call upon you, our hearers, to compare your situation with that of the centurion and the soldiers. They were told by a prophet that they were to be saved, and when that prophet told them what they were to do for the purpose of saving themselves, they obeyed him. They did not say, " O it is all predestinated, and we may give up our anxieties, and do nothing." They were just as strenuous and as active, as if there had been no predestination in the matter. Paul's previous assurance, that all was to end well, had no effect in lulling them to indolence. It did end well, not however without their exertions, but by their exertions. How much more does it lie upon you to enter with earnestness upon the business of doing. We can give you no assurance of its being the decree of God, that any of you shall be saved. But we can give you the assurance, that you will be saved, if you do such and such things. Surely, if the people whom Paul addressed, did not feel themselves exempted by their knowledge

of God's decree, from practically entering upon those measures which carried forward its accomplishment, you, who have no such knowledge, must feel doubly impelled by the uncertainty which hangs over you, to the work of making your calling and your election sure. You know in general, that predestination is a doctrine of the Bible, but there is not one of you who can say of himself, that God has made known his decrees to me, and given me directly to understand, that I am the object of a blessed predestination. This is one point of which you know nothing; but there is another point of which you know something—and that is, if I believe, if I repent, if I be made like unto Christ, if I obtain the Holy Spirit to work in me a conformity to his image, and I am told, that I shall obtain it if I ask it—then by this I become an heir of life, and the decree of which I know nothing at the outset of my concern about salvation, will become more and more apparent to me as I advance in a meetness for heaven, and will, at length, become fully, and finally, and conclusively made known by its accomplishment. I may suffer my curiosity to expatiate on the question, "Am I, or am I not, of the election of God?" But my wisdom tells me that this is not the business on hand. It is not

the matter which I am called on to do with at present. After Paul said to his companions that it was quite indispensable to their safety that the sailors should be kept in the vessel, what did the centurion and his men do? Did they fall a speculating about the decrees? Did they hug themselves in the confidence, that as their safety was a point sure and determined upon, they need to take no trouble at all in the concern? O no! No sooner did Paul give the word, than they acted upon it. They gave themselves up with all the promptitude of men whose lives were at stake, to the business on hand. They cut the ropes—they let go the boat—they kept in the sailors—and from the very first moment of Paul's address to them on the subject, all was bustling, and strenuous, and unremitting activity; till, by the unwearied perseverance of these living and operative instruments, the decree of God was accomplished. Now, they were much better acquainted with the decree which respected them, than you are with the decree respecting you. They had the beforehand knowledge of it, and will you be less active, or less strenuous, than they? Do, therefore, betake yourselves to the business on hand. Let our exhortations to embrace the free offer of the Gospel—to rely on Christ as your Sa-

viour—to resolve against all your iniquities, and turn unto him—to ply the throne of grace for the strengthening influence of that Spirit, by which alone you are enabled to die unto all sin, and live unto all righteousness—let this have an immediate, and a stirring, and a practical influence upon you. If you put this influence away from you, you are in a direct way now of proving what we tremble to think may be rendered clear and indisputable at last, on the great day of the revelation of hidden things, that you have neither part nor lot in the matter. Whatever the employment be which takes you up, and hinders you from entering immediately on the work of faith and repentance, it is an alarming symptom of your soul, that you are so taken up —and should the employment be an idle dreaming, and amusing of yourselves with the decrees and counsels of heaven, it is not the less alarming. Some will spend their time in inquiries about the number of the saved, when they ought to be striving for themselves, that they might obtain an entrance into the strait gate; and some will waste those precious moments in speculating about the secrets of the book of life, which they should fill up by supporting themselves, and making progress through the narrowness of the way that leads to it. The plain

business we lay upon you, is to put away from you the evil of your doings—to submit yourselves to Christ as he is offered to you—to fly to his atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of your offences—to place yourselves under the guidance of his word, and a dependence on the influences of his Spirit—to live no longer to yourselves, but to him—and to fill up your weeks and your days with those fruits of righteousness, by which God is glorified. We stand here by the decree of heaven, and it is by the same decree that you are now sitting round and listening to us. We feel the importance of the situation we occupy; and though we believe in the sovereignty of God, and the unfailingness of all his appointments, this, instead of restraining, impels us to bring the message of the Gospel, with all the practical urgency of its invitations, and its warnings, to bear upon you. We feel, with all our belief in predestination, that our business is not to forbear this urgency, but to ply you with it most anxiously, and earnestly, and unceasingly—and you should feel with the same belief in your mind, that your business is not to resist this urgency, but to be guided by its impulse. Who knows but we may be the humble instrument, and you the undeserved subjects of some high and heavenly ordination?

The cutting of the ropes was the turning point on which the deliverance of Paul's company from shipwreck was suspended. Who knows but the urgency we now ply you with, telling upon you, and carrying your purposes along with it, may be the very step in the wonderful progress of God's operations, on which your conversion hinges? We, therefore, press the Gospel with all its duties, and all its promises, and all its privileges upon you. O listen, and resolve, and, manfully forsaking all that keeps you from the Saviour, we call upon you, from this moment, to give yourselves up unto him; and be assured, it is only by acting in obedience to such calls laid before you in the Bible, and sounded in your ear from the pulpit, that your election unto life can ever be made known in this world, or reach its positive consummation in eternity.

And now you can have no difficulty in understanding how it is that we make our calling and our election sure. It is not in the power of the elect to make their election surer in itself than it really is—for this is a sureness which is not capable of receiving any addition. It is not in the power of the elect to make it surer to God—for all futurity is submitted to his all-seeing eye,

and his absolute knowledge stands in need of no confirmation. But there is such a thing as the elect being ignorant for a time of their own election, and their being made sure of it in the progress of evidence and discovery. And therefore it is that they are called to make their election sure to themselves, or to make themselves sure of their election. And how is this to be done? Not by reading it in the book of God's decrees—not by obtaining from him any direct information about his counsels—not by conferring with prophet or angel, gifted with the revelation of hidden things. But the same God who elects some unto everlasting life, and keeps back from them all direct information about it, tells them that he who believeth, and he who repenteth, and he who obeyeth the Gospel, shall obtain everlasting life. We shall never in this world have an immediate communication from him, whether we are of the elect or not—but let us believe—let us repent—let us obey the Saviour—and from the first moment of our setting ourselves to these things in good earnest, we may conceive the hope of a place among the heirs of immortality. In the progress and success of our endeavours, this hope may advance and grow brighter within us. As we grow in the exercises of faith and obedience,

the light of a cheering manifestation is more sensibly felt, and our hope ripens into assurance. "Hereby do we know that we know him, by our keeping his commandments," is an evidence which every year becomes clearer and more encouraging; and thus, by a well-sustained perseverance in the exercises of the Christian life, do we labour with all diligence to make our calling and election sure. We call upon you, in the language of the Apostle, to have faith, and to this faith add virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity. It is by the doing of these things, that you are made sure of your calling and election, "for if ye do these things," says Peter, "ye shall never fail, and an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

If there be any of you who have not followed this train of observation—if it still remain one of those things of Paul which are hard to be understood—let us beseech you, at least, that you wrest it not to your own destruction, by remitting your activity, and your diligence, and your painstaking in the service of Christ. Why, the doctrine of election leaves our duty to ex-

hort, and your duty to obey, on the same footing on which it found them. We are commissioned to lay before you the free offer of the Gospel—to press it on the acceptance of one and all of you—to assure every individual amongst you of a hearty welcome from the Lord God merciful and gracious—to call you to the service of Christ, that great Master of the household of faith—to urge it upon you, that you must renounce every other master, and, casting all your idols, and vanities, and iniquities away from you, to close with the invitation, and be diligent in all the duties and performances of the Gospel. If you resist, or put off—if, blind to the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, you suffer it not to lead you to repentance—if the call of "awake to righteousness, and sin not," make no practical impression on you—if the true assurance of pardon for the sins of the past, do not fill your heart with the desire of sanctification for the future—if the word of Christ be not so received by you as to lead to the doing of it—then you are just leaving undone those things, of which we say in the words of the text, "Except these things be done, ye cannot be saved"—and to all the guilt of your past disobedience, you add the aggravation of putting away from you both the of-

fered atonement and the commanded repentance of the Gospel, and "how can you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?"

SERMON XII.

ON THE NATURE OF THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

MATTHEW XII. 31, 32.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

LET us never suspend the practical influence of what we do know, by idly rambling in a vain and impertinent pursuit after what we do not know. Thus much we know from the Bible, that God refuses not his Holy Spirit to them who ask it—that every right movement of principle within us is from him—that when we feel an impulse of conscience, we feel the Spirit of God knocking at the door of our hearts, and challenging from us that attention and that obe-

dience which are due to the great Lawgiver—that if we follow not the impulse, we provoke and dissatisfy him who is the Author of it—and that there is such a thing as tempting him to abandon us altogether, and to surrender the friendly office of plying us any longer with his admonitions and his warnings. Hence, an emphatic argument for immediate repentance. By every moment of delay, we hasten upon ourselves the awful crisis of being let alone. The conscience is every day getting harder; and he who sits behind, and is the unseen Author of all its instigations, is lifting every day a feebler voice; and coming always nearer and nearer to that point in the history of every determined sinner, when left to his own infatuation, he can hold up a stubborn and unyielding front to all that instrumentality of advice and of expostulation which is brought to bear upon him. The preacher plies him with his weekly voice, but the Spirit refuses to lend it his constraining energy—and all that is tender, and all that is terrifying in his Sabbath argument plays around his heart, without reaching it. The judgments of God go abroad against him, and as he carries his friends or his children to the grave, a few natural tears may bear witness to the tenderness he bore them—but that Spirit who gives to these

judgments all their moral significancy, withholds from him the anointing which remaineth, and the man relapses as before into all the obstinate habits, and all the uncrucified affections which he has hitherto indulged in. The disease gathers upon him, and gets a more rooted inveteracy than ever—and thus it is, that there are thousands and thousands more, who, though active and astir on that living scene of population which is around us, have an iron hardness upon their souls, which makes them, in reference to the things of God, dark and sullen as the grave, and fast locks them in all the insensibility of spiritual death. Is there no old man of your acquaintance, who realizes this sad picture of one left to himself, that we have now attempted so rapidly to set before you? Then know, that by every deed of wilful sin, that by every moment of wilful delay in the great matter of repentance, that by every stifled warning of conscience, that by every deafening of its authoritative voice among the temptations of the world, and the riot of lawless acquaintances, you are just moving yourself to the limits of this helpless and irrecoverable condition. We have no doubt, that you may have the intention of making a violent step, and suddenly turning round to the right path ere you die. But this you will

not do but by an act of obedience to the reproaches of a conscience that is ever getting harder. This you will not do without the constraining influence of that Spirit, who is gradually dying away from you. This you will not do but in virtue of some overpowering persuasion from that monitor who is now stirring within you, but with whom you are now taking the most effectual method of drowning his voice, and disarming him of all his authority. Do not you perceive, that, in these circumstances, every act of delay is madness—that you are getting by every hour of it into deeper water—that you are consolidating a barrier against your future return to the paths of righteousness, which you vainly think you will be able to surmount when the languor and infirmity of old age have got hold of you—that you are strengthening and multiplying around you the wiles of an entanglement, which all the strugglings of deathbed terror cannot break asunder—that you are insulting the Spirit of God by this daily habit of stifling and neglecting the other and the other call that he is sounding to your moral ear, through the organ of conscience. And O the desperate hazard and folly of such a calculation! Think you, think you, that this is the way of gaining his friendly presence at that awful moment,

when the urgent sense of guilt and of danger forces from the sinner an imploring cry as he stands on the brink of eternity?

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

You see, then, how a man may shut against himself all the avenues of reconciliation. There is nothing mysterious in the kind of sin by which the Holy Spirit is tempted to abandon him to that state in which there can be no forgiveness, and no return unto God. It is by a movement of conscience within him, that the man is made

sensible of sin—that he is visited with the desire of reformation—that he is given to feel his need both of mercy to pardon, and of grace to help him—in a word, that he is drawn unto the Saviour, and brought into that intimate alliance with him by faith, which brings down upon him both acceptance with the Father, and all the power of a new and a constraining impulse, to the way of obedience. But this movement is a suggestion of the Spirit of God, and if it be resisted by any man, the Spirit is resisted. The God who offers to draw him unto Christ, is resisted. The man refuses to believe, because his deeds are evil; and by every day of perseverance in these deeds, the voice which tells him of their guilt, and urges him to abandon them, is resisted—and thus, the Spirit ceases to suggest, and the Father, from whom the Spirit proceedeth, ceases to draw, and the inward voice ceases to remonstrate—and all this because their authority has been so often put forth, and so often turned from. This is the deadly offence which has reared an impassable wall against the return of the obstinately impenitent. This is the blasphemy to which no forgiveness can be granted, because in its very nature, the man who has come this length, feels no movement of conscience towards that ground

on which alone forgiveness can be awarded to him—and where it is never refused even to the very worst and most malignant of human iniquities. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is not peculiar to any one age. It does not lie in any one unfathomable mystery. It may be seen at this day in thousands and thousands more, who, by that most familiar and most frequently exemplified of all habits, a habit of resistance to a sense of duty, have at length stifled it altogether, and driven their inward monitor away from them, and have sunk into a profound moral lethargy, and so will never obtain forgiveness—not because forgiveness is ever refused to any who repent and believe the Gospel, but because they have made their faith and their repentance impracticable. They choose not to repent—and this choice has been made so often and so perseveringly, that the Spirit has let them alone. They have obstinately clung to their love of darkness rather than of light, and the Spirit has at length turned away from them since they will have it so. They wish not to believe, because their deeds are evil, and that Spirit has ceased to strive with them, who has so often spoken to them in vain—and whose many remonstrances have never prevailed upon them to abandon the evil of their doings.

Take all this attentively along with you, and the whole mysteriousness of this sin against the Holy Ghost should be done away. Grant him the office with which he is invested in the Word of God, even the office of instigating the conscience to all its reprovals of sin, and to all its admonitions of repentance—and then, if ever you witnessed the case of a man whose conscience had fallen into a profound and irrecoverable sleep, or, at least, had lost to such a degree its power of control over him, that he stood out against every engine which was set up to bring him to the faith and the repentance of the New Testament—behold in such a man a sinner against conscience to such a woeful extent, that conscience had given up its direction of him; or, in other words, a sinner against the Holy Ghost to such an extent, that he had let down the office of warning him away from that ground of danger and of guilt on which he stood so immoveably posted—or, of urging him onward to that sure road of access, where if a man seek for pardon, he will never miss it, and where, if he cry for the clean heart and the right spirit, he will not cry in vain.

And as there is nothing dark or incomprehensible in the nature of this sin, so there is

nothing in it to impair the freeness of the Gospel—or the universality of its calls and of its offers—or its power of salvation to all who will —or that attribute which is expressly ascribed to it, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It is never said that pardon through that blood, which is distinctly stated to cleanse from all sin, it is nowhere said, that this pardon is extended to any but to those who believe. If you do not believe, you do not get pardon—and if you will not believe, because you love darkness rather than light—if you will not believe, because you will not abandon those evil deeds which the Spirit tells you through the conscience, that you must forsake in coming unto Christ—if his repeated calls have been so unheeded and so withstood by you, that he has at length ceased from striving, then the reason why your sin is unpardonable, is just because you have refused the Gospel salvation. The reason why your case is irrecoverable, is just because you have refused the method of recovery so long, and so often, that every call of repentance has now come to play upon you in vain. The reason why you lie under a guilt that can meet with no forgiveness, is not that one or all of your sins are of a die so deep and so inveterate, that the cleansing power of the Saviour's

atonement cannot overmatch them. Let the invitation to the fountain that is opened in the house of Judah, circulate among you as freely as the preacher's voice—for sure we are, that there does not stand, at this moment, within the reach of hearing us, any desperado in vice, so sunk in the depths of his dark and unnatural rebellion, that he is not welcome if he will. But, if ye *will not* come that ye may have life, this is your sin. This is the barrier in the way of your forgiveness. Grant us repentance and faith, and we know not of a single mysterious crime in the whole catalogue of human depravity, that the atoning blood of our Saviour cannot wash away. But withhold from us repentance and faith—let us see the man who stands unrebuked out of his wickedness by all that conscience has reproached him with—unmoved out of the hardness of his unbelief by all that power of tenderness, which should have softened his unrelenting bosom, when told of the Saviour who had poured out his soul unto the death for him—if all this contempt and resistance of his has been so long and so grievously persisted in, that the Spirit has ceased to strive—then, it is not the power of the Gospel that is in fault, but the obstinacy of him who has rejected it. The sufficiency of the Gospel is not

detracted from by so much as a jot or a tittle. To this very hour may we proclaim it as the savour of life unto life, to the very worst of sinners who receive it. But if he so turn aside from its invitations, and the habit be so fixed with him, and conscience get into a state of such immoveable dormancy, that the Spirit gives him over, it is not that the Gospel does not carry a remedy along with it for one and all of his offences, but because he refuses that Gospel, that it is to him the savour of death unto death.

A king publishes a wide and unexcepted amnesty to the people of a rebellious district in his empire, upon the bare act of each presenting himself within a limited period, before an authorised agent, and professing his purposes of future loyalty. Does it at all detract from the clemency of this deed of grace, that many of the rebels feel a strong reluctance to this personal exhibition of themselves; and that the reluctance strengthens and accumulates upon them by every day of their postponement; and that even before the season of mercy has expired, it has risen to such a degree of aversion on their part, as to form a moral barrier in the way of their prescribed return, that is altogether impassable? Will you say, because there is no

forgiveness to them, that there is any want of amplitude in that charter of forgiveness which is proclaimed in the hearing of all; or, that pardon has not been provided for every offence, because some offenders are to be found, with such a degree of perverseness and of obstinacy in their bosom, as constrains them to a determined refusal of all pardon?

The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and there is not a human creature, who let him repent and believe, will ever find the crimson inveteracy of his manifold offences to be beyond the reach of its purifying and its peace-speaking power. And tell us if it detract by a single iota from the omnipotence of this great Gospel remedy, that there are many sinners in the world who refuse to lay hold of it. To the hour of death it is within the reach of all and of any who will. This is the period in the history of each individual, at which this great act of amnesty expires—and to the last minute of his life, it is competent for me and for every minister of the Gospel to urge it upon him, in all the largeness and in all the universality which belong to it—and to assure him, that there is not a single deed of wickedness with which his faithful memory now agonizes him, not one habit of

disobedience that now clothes his retrospect of the past in the sad colouring of despair, all the guilt of which, and all the condemnation of which, the blood of the offered Saviour cannot do away. But, though we may offer, that is not to say that he will accept. Though we may proclaim and urge the proclamation in his hearing, with every tone of truth and of tenderness, that is not to say, that our voice will enter with power, or make its resistless way through those avenues of his heart, where he has done so much to rear a defending barrier, that may prove to be impenetrable. Though there be truth in our every announcement, that is not to say, that the demonstration of the Spirit will accompany it—even that Spirit who long ere now may have left to himself the man, who, his whole life long has grieved and resisted him. It is still true, that the pardon lies at his acceptance; and it may be as true, that there can be no pardon to him because he has brought such an inveterate blindness upon his soul, that he will neither receive the truth, nor love it, nor feel those genuine impulses by which it softens the heart of man to repentance. And thus it is, that while the blood of Christ cleanseth the every sin of every believer, the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, because with

this sin, and with its consequences upon him, man wills not, and repents not, and believes not.

And now for the interesting question,—How am I to know that I have committed this sin, that is said to be beyond the reach of forgiveness? We are sure, that the right solution of this question, if well understood, would go to dissipate all that melancholy which has been felt upon the subject, by many a bewildered inquirer. You cannot take a review of the years that are gone, and fetch up this mysterious sin to your remembrance out of the history of the sins that are past. There is not one of them, which, if turned away from, in the faith of that pardon that is through the blood of the atonement, there is not one of them beyond the reach of the great redemption of the Gospel. The sin against the Holy Ghost is not some awful and irrevocable deed, around which a disordered fancy has thrown its superstitious array, and which beams in deeper terror upon the eye of the mind, from the very obscurity by which it is encompassed. There ought to be no darkness and no mystery about it. The sin against the Holy Ghost is such a daring and obstinate rebellion against the prerogatives of conscience—

that all its calls to penitency have been repelled—and all the urgency of its admonitions to flee to the offered Saviour, has been withstood—and all this obstinacy of resistance has been carried forward to such a point in the history of the unhappy man, that his conscience has ceased from the exercise of its functions; and the Holy Spirit has laid down his office of prompting it; and the tenderness of a beseeching God may be sounded in his ear—but unaccompanied as it is by that power which makes a willing and obedient people, it reaches not his sullen and inflexible heart. And instead, therefore, of looking for that sin among those imaginary few who mourn and are in distress, under an overwhelming sense of its enormity, I look for it to those thousands, who, trenched among the secularities of the world, or fully set on the mad career of profligacy, are posting their careless and infatuated way—and suffering Sabbaths and opportunities to pass over them—and turn with contempt from the foolishness of preaching—and hold up the iron front of insensibility against all that is appalling in the judgments of God—and cling to this perishable scene under the most touching experiences of its vanity—and walk their unfaultering path amid all the victims which mortality has strewn around them—and every year

drink deeper into the spirit of the world—till the moral disease rises to such an inveteracy, that all the engines of conversion, unaided, as they are, by that peculiar force and demonstration which is from on high, fall powerless as infancy upon them, and every soul amongst them sunk in torpor immoveable, will never, never, be made to know the power and the life of a spiritual resurrection.

We know nothing that goes farther to nullify the Bible, than the habit of subjecting the interpretation of its passages to any other principle, than that all its parts must consist and be in harmony with each other. There has a world of mischief been done by the modifications that have been laid on the obvious meaning of Scripture, with the purpose of rendering it more palatable to our independent views of what is right, and wise, and reasonable. This, in fact, is deposing the word of God from that primitive authority which belongs to it, as the court of highest appeal—all whose decisions are final and irreversible. Grant us that there is no contradiction between what we find in the book of God's counsel, and what we know by the evidence of our own experience, or the overbearing testimony of others—and such we hold to be the ig-

norance of man about the whole of that spiritual and unseen world which lies beyond the circle of his own observation, that we count it not merely his most becoming piety, but we count it also his soundest and most enlightened philosophy, to sit down with the docility of a little child to all that is intimated and made known to him by a well-attested revelation. After the deductions we have just now made, we know of no other principle on which we should ever offer to modify a verse or a clause of the written record; but the principle of that entire consistency which must reign throughout all its communications. We know of no other cross-examination which we have a right to set up on this witness to the invisible things of faith—than to try it by itself, and to condemn it, if possible, out of its own mouth, by confronting together its own depositions. We are only at freedom to sustain or to qualify the literal sense of one of its announcements, by the literal and equally authoritative sense of some other of its announcements. And such is our respect for the paramount authority of Scripture, that we know of no discovery more pleasing, than that by which the apparent inconsistency between two places, is so cleared up, that all necessity for encroaching upon the literal sense of either of them is completely

done away—for it goes to establish our every impression of the unviolable sanctity of its various communications, and to heighten our belief that every semblance of opposition between the particulars of the divine testimony, exists not in the testimony itself, but in the misapprehension of our own dark and imperfect understandings.

Now, if you look to the 31st verse of the 12th chapter of Matthew, you will perceive, that all who think the sin against the Holy Ghost to lie in the commission of some rare and monstrous, but at the same time specific iniquity, cannot admit the first clause of the verse without qualifying it by some of the undeniable doctrines of the New Testament. They would say, it is not true that all manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men, with the exception of this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which they conceive to occur but seldom in the history of human wickedness. They would say, that there is forgiveness to no sin whatever but on the faith and the repentance of him who has incurred it—and we must, therefore, suppose this, and qualify the clause by this indispensable condition, and thus make the clause to tell us, how such is the power of the Gospel, that all the sin

and blasphemy shall be forgiven of those who have embraced it—save that one sin against the Holy Ghost, for the remission of which not even their acceptance of the Gospel of Christ could avail them.

Now, the explanation we have given of this sin renders all this work of annexing terms and modifications to this verse of the Bible unnecessary, and gives, we think, even to its literal and unrestricted meaning, a most lucid consistency with all that is leading and that is undeniable in the doctrine of the New Testament. If the sin against the Holy Ghost be just that sin, in virtue of which the calls and offers of the Gospel are so rejected, as to be finally and irreversibly put away from us, then it is true, it is absolutely and unreservedly true, that all other manner of sin shall be forgiven but this one only. All who so reject this Gospel, have sinned against the Holy Ghost—and none who accept this Gospel have incurred this sin, nor shall they want the forgiveness that is there provided for them. It is quite in vain to think, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is confined to that period of the world, at which our Saviour made his personal appearance in it. The truth is, that it is since Christ withdrew from the world,

that he now carries forward by the Spirit, as his agent and substitute, the business of pressing home upon men the acceptance of the Gospel, by working with their consciences. He employs the Spirit as his witness, since he himself has gone away from us; and as in the business of entertaining the calls and the offers of the New Testament, our doings are more exclusively with this Spirit, and not at all with the Saviour himself personally, we are surely as much in the way now of committing the sin in question, as in those days when the Holy Ghost was not so abundantly given, because Jesus Christ was not then glorified. All those, be assured, who refuse the Gospel now, do so because they refuse the testimony of this witness—do so because they stifle within them the urgency of his rebuke, when he tells them of faith and of repentance—do so, when he offers to convince them on principles, that would be clear to themselves, could they only be so far arrested by the imperious claims of God and of eternity, as attend to them—convince them that they are indeed on a way of guilt and of alienation, which, if not turned from, through the revealed Mediator, will land them in the condemnation of a most righteous and unmitigable law. And thus, in the day of reckoning, will this verse, in its

most plain and obvious literality, be so accomplished on the hosts who are assembled round the judgment-seat—that all who are free from this sin shall have their every other sin forgiven, just because they have obeyed the Gospel in embracing the overtures of forgiveness—and that all who, on that day, shall find no escape, and no forgiveness, have this doom laid upon them, just because each, without exception, has incurred the sin to which no forgiveness is awarded, by the very act of neglecting the great salvation.

The sin then against the Holy Ghost, so far from conferring any rare distinction of wickedness on him who is guilty of it, is, in fact, the sin of all who, living under the dispensation of the Gospel, have, by their rejection of it, made it the "savour of death unto death." It is a sin which can be charged upon every man who has put the overtures of forgiveness away from him. It is a sin which if, on the great day of examination, you are found to be free from, will argue your acceptance of the Gospel, in virtue of which its forgiveness is made sure to you. And it is a sin, which, if found on that day to adhere to you, will argue your final refusal of this same Gospel, in virtue of which

your forgiveness is impossible—because you are out of the only way given under heaven whereby men can be saved. So that this sin, looked upon by many as the sin of one particular age, or, if possible to realize it in the present day, as only to be met with in a few solitary instances of enormous and unexpiable transgression, is the very sin upon which may be made to turn the condemnation and the ruin of the existing majority of our species.

Before we are done with this subject, there is one question that remains to be disposed of. Does it appear, from the historical circumstances of the case, that that conduct of the Pharisees which called forth from our Saviour the denunciation of the text, bears a resemblance to the account we have given of the sin against the Holy Ghost, as exemplified by the men of the present generation? In their rejecting of Christ, was there a determined rebellion of purpose against the light of their own conscience? Was there a wilful and resolved suppression of the force of evidence? Was there a habitual stifling within them of the movement and the impulse of moral principle? Was there a firm and deliberate posting of themselves on the ground of opposition, in the whole of their past resistance to this Jesus of Nazareth? Was there

an obstinate keeping of this ground? Was there an audacious and desperate intent of holding out against all that could be offered in the shape of proofs or of remonstrances on the side of Christianity? Was there a voluntary darkening, on their part, of the light of truth, when it began to dawn upon their souls, and threatened to carry their convictions away from them? Was there a habit of fetching up, at all hazards, every argument, however false and however blasphemous it may be, on which they might rest the measures of a proud and interested party, and thus might give the shape and the colour of plausibility to that systematic opposition they had entered on?

It strikes us, that the whole history of the Pharisees in the New Testament, holds them out in the very attitude of mind which we have now described to you. And think you not that, in the work of maintaining this attitude against the warfare of all that moral and miraculous argument which was brought to bear upon them, they never smothered the instigations of conscience, and through it rebelled against that Spirit, who conveyed, by this organ of the inner man, the whispers of his still but impressive voice? "Which of you convinceth me of sin," says the Saviour, "and if I tell you the truth,

why do you not believe me?" Did conscience never tell them how impossible it was that Jesus of Nazareth could lie? Did not the words of him who spake as never man spake, bear upon them the impress of truth as well as of dignity? Is there not such a thing as the suspicious aspect of an impostor, and is there not also such a thing as the open, the declared, the ingenuous, and altogether overbearing aspect of integrity—and is it not conceivable, how, in this way, the words of the Saviour might have carried such a moral evidence along with them, as to stamp an unquestionable character on all his attestations? Now, was there no resisting of the Holy Spirit in the act of shutting the eye of the judgment against the whole weight and authority of this character? In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the men of that day were honoured with the singular privilege of beholding God manifest in the flesh—of seeing all the graces of the Holy Spirit substantiated, without one taint of imperfection, on the life and character of one who wore the form of the species—of witnessing, if we may so express ourselves, a sensible exhibition of the Godhead—of hearing the truth of God fall in human utterance upon their ears, with a tone of inimitable candour—of seeing the earnest longing of God after the crea-

tures he had formed, stamped in living and undeniable traces upon a human countenance—of beholding the tenderness of God expressed in human tears, by him who wept over the sins and the sufferings of mankind—and all the goodness of Deity distinctly announcing itself in the mild and impressive sympathies of a human voice. Think you not that there was no struggling with their own consciences, and no wilful blinding of their own hearts, on the part of those by whom such an exhibition was resisted? Surely, surely, the Spirit of God did much to subdue their acquiescence in the alone way of salvation—when all his fruits and all his accomplishments were gathered upon the person of the Redeemer into one visible assemblage—when the whole force of this moral ascendancy was made so nearly and so repeatedly to bear upon them—when truth, with all its pleading energy, assailed them—and gentleness tried to win them over to the cause of their own eternity—and the soft eye of compassion beamed upon them—and the unwearied forbearance, which no weight of personal injustice could overcome, told them how, for their sakes, Jesus of Nazareth was ready to do all and to suffer all—and patience, even unto martyrdom, left a meek, but a firm testimony behind it. O! think

you not, that in the perverse representations, and the spiteful malignity, and the sullen immoveable hardness, by which all this was withstood and overborne, there was such an outrage upon the authority of conscience, and such a dark and determined principle of rebellion against him who prompts it with all its instigations, as by provoking him to cast them off from all his further communications, might raise an eternal barrier against that faith, and that repentance, and that obedience to the Gospel of Christ, through which alone forgiveness is extended to a guilty world?

To aggravate still further this resistance to the moral claims of the Saviour, on the part of his inflexible enemies, let us see how these very claims told on the consciences of other men. The officers whom they sent to apprehend him, when they went faultered from the purpose, at what they saw and heard—and when they returned with their errand unfulfilled, and the answer in their mouth, that "surely never man spake like this man," they found the masters they had to deal with were made of sterner materials—men who knew not what it was to faulter—men who reproached them for their moral sensibility—and who had sternly resolved, at all

hazards, and in defiance to all principle, to rid themselves of this dangerous pretender. Again, when they instigated Pilate to a capital sentence against him, the Roman Governor was shaken by all that he observed of this innocent victim—but look all the while at the unrelenting constancy with which they kept by their purpose; and in the barbarous prosecution of it, schooled the governor out of his difficulties; and raised the frenzy of the populace; and surrounded the best and kindest of the species with the scowl of a brutal and reviling multitude. And, lastly, when he had sealed his testimony by his blood, mark how the man who presided over the execution, was overpowered into the acknowledgment, that "Surely this was the Son of God;" and how they, unsoftened and unsubdued, stood fast to their object—and got his body to be watched, and a story to be devised, and a falsehood of deliberate manufacture to be thrown afloat, with which they might stem the growing faith of our Saviour's resurrection. Now, in this difference between the resolved and inflexible hatred of the Jewish persecutors of Christ, and the relentings of other men, do you see no suppression of the voice of conscience—no resistance to that light of principle which sends forth an occasional gleam over the path of the

determinedly reprobate, do you see no one of those ingredients which give to the sin against the Holy Ghost all the malignancy that belongs to it—or, rather, in this hard and unmoveable hostility against one whose challenge to convince him of sin, they dared not to entertain; against one, of whom they could not fail to perceive, that he was the mildest, and the sincerest, and the most unoffending, and the most unwearied in well-doing of all the characters that had met their observation, do you not perceive how it was in the cause of their own offended pride, and their own threatened interest, that they made their systematic resistance to every moral argument, and hurried away their minds from every painful remonstrance—and that too, in the very style in which the obstinately impenitent of the day do, in resistance to every demonstration of guilt, and to every warning of danger, walk in the counsel of their own hearts, and in the sight of their own eyes?

It is very true, that it was upon an outward act of speaking, on the part of the Pharisees, that our Saviour uttered this remarkable denunciation. But remember what he says himself upon this subject—how the things which come out of a man are evil, because they are the pro-

ducts of a heart which is evil. Remember what is said a few verses before—how our Saviour, who knew what was in man, knew the thoughts of those Pharisees; and it is upon his knowledge of their thoughts, that he ascribed such a malignity, and laid such a weight of condemnation on the words which conveyed them. Remember what is said a few verses after, where the fruit is represented as bad, just because the tree is bad—where the words have their whole character of evil imparted to them, just because it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and out of the evil humours of the heart, that the man bringeth forth evil things. And surely, when, after our Saviour had uttered such a peculiar sentence of condemnation on the sin against the Holy Ghost, he expressly connects the words of the mouth, with the disposition of the heart, ere he tells us that it was by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned—we ought no longer to do what we are sure is done by many in their obscure imaginations upon this subject, we ought not to liken the sin against the Holy Ghost to the spell of some magical incantation, deriving the whole of that deadly taint which belongs to it, from some infernal charm with which the utter-

ance of mere language is darkly and unaccountably impregnated. But knowing that every denunciation of our great spiritual Teacher, had some clear and unchangeable principle of morality to rest upon—and perceiving, as we do, that on this very occasion he refers us to the disposition of the heart, as that which gives to the utterance of the tongue all its malignity, let us, when reading of this desperate guilt of the Pharisees, look to the spirit and moral temper of the Pharisees, and, if possible, gather a something that may carry to our own bosoms a salutary and convincing application.

And a single glance at the circumstances may be enough to satisfy us, that never, in any one recorded passage of their history, did they evince the bent of so inflexible a determination against the authority of conscience—never such a wilful darkening of their own hearts against the light and the power of evidence, as in the passage that is now before us. The whole weight of that moral argument on which we have already expatiated, was reinforced by a miracle so striking and so palpable in its effects, that all the people were thrown into amazement. But what constituted the peculiarity of the miracle was, that it was just such a miracle as the

Pharisees themselves had been accustomed to look upon with veneration, and had viewed as an example of successful hostility against the empire of darkness. They had faith in these possessions. They counted every one of them to be the work of Beelzebub, and the casting out of any of them as a direct triumph of warfare against the prince of the devils. They themselves, it would appear, laid claim to the power of dispossessing these demons, and we have no doubt that the imagination of such a power residing with them and their children, or proselytes, would help to give them that prophetical sanctity in the eyes of the common people, which they so much aspired after. But when the very thing on which they tried to strengthen their own claims to authority, was done by that man, the progress of whose authority among his countrymen, they were determined, at all hazards, to arrest; they went round the whole compass of their principles, and quashed the voice of every one of them, rather than own the hand of God, or submit to the demonstration of his power in the miracle before them. It was indeed a desperate fetch that they made for an argument, when the very work in which they gloried, and on which they founded the credit of their own order, was so

maligned and misrepresented by them. They had ever been in the habit of ascribing the possessions of that age to the power of Beelzebub—and now to give a colour to their hatred of Jesus and his claims, they suppose the house of Beelzebub to be divided against itself, and they ascribe to his power a miracle, the doing of which went to dispossess him of a part of his empire. They pretended that their sons or their proselytes had the power of casting out those possessions, and never failed to ascribe this power to the Spirit and the countenance of God—but now they turned round upon the matter, and by rearing their argument against the Saviour in the direct face of their own principle, did they prove how firmly they were resolved to lay hold of an anything, rather than admit the claims of one who was so offensive to them. Thus did they give, perhaps, at this moment, a more conspicuous evidence than they had ever done before, how every proof and every remonstrance would all be wasted upon them. The Spirit of God had gone his uttermost length with them, and on abandoning them for ever, he left behind him their blood upon their own head, and the misery of an irrecoverable condition, that was of their own bringing on. He had long borne with them—and it

will be seen in the day of reckoning, when all mysteries are cleared up, how great the patience, and the kindness, and the unwearied perseverance were which they had resisted. For though the Spirit strives long, he does not strive always; and they brought on this crisis in their history, just by the very steps in which every impenitent man brings it on in the present day, by a wilful resistance to the light of their own understanding; by a resolute suppression of the voice of their own conscience.

But we must bring all these explanations to a close. The distinction between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost, may be illustrated by what he says of the difference between bearing witness of himself, and another bearing witness of him. If he had had no other testimony than his own to offer, they had not had sin. If he had not done the works before them which none other man did, and which no mere son of man could do, they had not had sin. If he had had nothing to show on which to sustain the character that signalized him above the mere children of men, their resistance could have been forgiven—but he had shown the most abundant evidence on this point—he had just performed a deed which their every habit, and

their every conception, led them to ascribe to the Spirit and the power of God—he had brought forward what, to their own judgments, was the testimony of the Spirit, and they resisted it. It was no longer now an opposition to man, and a railing of man, and a contemptuous negligence of man—all this is sinful; but it was not that which blocked up the way against the remission of sin—it was when they reviled him who offered to lead them on in that way, that they were ever strengthening the barrier which lay across the path of acceptance. While the last and most conclusive proof that would be given of Jesus having indeed the seal and the commission of the Spirit upon him, was not yet tried, and found ineffectual—all their opposition to him still partook of opposition to one of whom the most decisive evidence that he was any thing more than the Son of man, was still in reserve. It still partook of opposition to a fellow-man. But when that decisive evidence was at length offered, and the Spirit interposed with his last and greatest attempt to vindicate his own seal, and to authenticate his own commission on the person of Jesus of Nazareth—then that which was before the speaking evil of the Son of man, became the speaking evil of the Son of God; and that, aggravated to the uttermost length

that it now would be permitted to go. And the Pharisees, by smothering the light of all that evidence which the Holy Spirit had brought forward, both in the miracles that were done, and in the graces of that sinless example which was set so impressively before them, had, by that time, raised in their hearts such an entrenchment of prejudice against the faith of the Gospel, and so discouraged the Holy Spirit from any farther attempt to scale and to surmount it, that all recovery was hopeless, and all forgiveness was impossible.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

ECCLESIASTES IV. 13.

"Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."

THERE is no one topic on which the Bible, throughout the variety of its separate compositions, maintains a more lucid and entire consistency of sentiment, than the superiority of moral over all physical and all external distinctions. This lesson is frequently urged in the Old Testament, and as frequently reiterated in the New. There is a predominance given in both to worth, and to wisdom, and to principle, which leads us to understand, that within the compass of human attainment, there is an object placed before us of a higher and more esti-

mable character than all the objects of a common-place ambition—that wherever there is mind, there stands associated with it a nobler and more abiding interest than all the aggrandizements which wealth or rank can bestow—that within the limits of the moral and intellectual department of our nature, there is a commodity which money cannot purchase, and possesses a more sterling excellence than all which money can command. This preference of man viewed in his essential attributes, to man viewed according to the variable accessories by which he is surrounded—this preference of the subject to all its outward and contingent modifications—this preference of man viewed as the possessor of a heart, and of a spirit, and of capacities for truth and for righteousness, to man signalized by prosperity, and clothed in the pomp and in the circumstance of its visible glories—this is quite akin with the superiority which the Bible every where ascribes to the soul over the body, and to eternity over time, and to the Supreme Author of Being over all that is subordinate and created. It marks a discernment, unclouded by all those associations which are so current and have so fatal an ascendancy in our world—the wisdom of a purer and more ethereal region than the one we occupy—the unpolluted clear-

ness of a light shining in a dark place, which announces its own coming to be from above, and gives every spiritual reader of the Bible to perceive the beaming of a powerful and presiding intelligence in all its pages.

One very animating inference to be drawn from our text, is how much may be made of humanity. Did a king come to take up his residence among you—did he shed a grandeur over your city by the presence of his court, and give the impulse of his expenditure to the trade of its population—it were not easy to rate the value and the magnitude which such an event would have on the estimation of a common understanding, or the degree of personal importance which would attach to him, who stood a lofty object in the eye of admiring townsmen. And yet it is possible, out of the raw and ragged materials of an obscurest lane, to rear an individual of more inherent worth, than him who thus draws the gaze of the world upon his person. By the act of training in wisdom's ways the most tattered and neglected boy who runs upon our pavements, do we present the community with that which, in wisdom's estimation, is of greater price, than this gorgeous inhabitant of a palace. And when one thinks how such a process may

be multiplied among the crowded families that are around us—when one thinks of the extent and the density of that mine of moral wealth, which retires, and deepens, and accumulates, behind each front of the street along which we are passing—when one tries to compute the quantity of spirit that is imbedded in the depth and the frequency of these human habitations, and reflects of this native ore, that more than the worth of a monarch may be stamped, by instruction, on each separate portion of it—a field is thus opened for the patriotism of those who want to give an augmented value to the produce of our land, which throws into insignificance all the enterprises of vulgar speculation. Commerce may flourish, or may fail—and amid the ruin of her many fluctuations, may elevate a few of the more fortunate of her sons to the affluence of princes. Thy merchants may be princes, and thy traffickers be the honourable of the earth. But if there be truth in our text, there may, on the very basis of human society, and by a silent process of education, materials be formed, which far outweigh in cost and true dignity, all the blazing pinnacles that glitter upon its summit—and it is indeed a cheering thought to the heart of a philanthropist, that near him lies a territory so ample, on which he

may expatiate—where for all his pains, and all his sacrifices, he is sure of a repayment more substantial, than was ever wafted by richly laden flotilla to our shores—where the return comes to him, not in that which superficially decks the man, but in a solid increment of value fixed and perpetuated on the man himself—where additions to the worth of the soul form the proceeds of his productive operation—and where, when he reckons up the profits of his enterprise, he finds them to consist of that, which, on the highest of all authorities, he is assured to be more than meat, of that which is greatly more than raiment.

Even without looking beyond the confines of our present world, the virtue of humble life will bear to be advantageously contrasted with all the pride and glory of an elevated condition. The man who, though among the poorest of them all, has a wisdom and a weight of character, which makes him the oracle of his neighbourhood—the man, who, vested with no other authority than the meek authority of worth, carries in his presence a power to shame and to overawe the profligacy that is around him—the venerable father, from whose lowly tenement the voice of psalms is heard to ascend with

the offering up of every evening sacrifice—the Christian sage, who, exercised among life's severest hardships, looks calmly onward to heaven, and trains the footsteps of his children in the way that leads to it—the eldest of a well-ordered family, bearing their duteous and honourable part in the contest with its difficulties and its trials—all these offer to our notice such elements of moral respectability, as do exist among the lowest orders of human society, and elements, too, which admit of being multiplied far beyond the reach of any present calculation. And while we hold nothing to be more unscriptural than the spirit of a factious discontent with the rulers of our land—while we feel nothing to be more untasteful than the insolence of a vulgar disdain towards men of rank, or men of opulence—yet should the king upon the throne be taught to understand, that there is a dignity of an intrinsically higher order than the dignity of birth or of power—a dignity which may be seen to sit with gracefulness on the meanest of his subjects—and which draws from the heart of the beholder a truer and profounder reverence.

So that, were it for nothing more than to bless and adorn our present state, there cannot be

an attempt of greater promise, than that of extending education among the throng of our peasantry—there cannot be a likelier way of filling the country with beauteous and exalted spectacles—there cannot be a readier method of pouring a glory over the face of our land, than that of spreading the wisdom of life, and the wisdom of principle, throughout the people who live in it—a glory differing in kind, but greatly higher in degree, than the glories of common prosperity. It is well that the progress of knowledge is now looked to by politicians without alarm—that the ignorance of the poor is no longer regarded as more essential to the devotion of their patriotism, than it is to the devotion of their piety—that they have, at length, found that the best way of disarming the lower orders of all that is threatening and tumultuous, is not to enthral, but to enlighten them—that the progress of truth among them, instead of being viewed with dismay, is viewed with high anticipation—and an impression greatly more just, and greatly more generous, is now beginning to prevail, that the strongest rampart which can possibly be thrown around the cause of public tranquillity, consists of a people raised by information, and graced by all moral and all Christian accomplishments.

For our own part, we trust, that the mighty interval of separation between the higher and lower orders of our community, will, at length, be broken down, not by any inroad of popular violence—not by the fierce and devouring sweep of any revolutionary tempest—not even by any new adjustment, either of the limits of power, or the limits of property—not, in short, as the result of any battle, fought either on the arena of war, or on the arena of politics—but as the fruit of that gradual equalization in mind and in manners, to which even now a sensible approach is already making on the part of our artizans and our labourers. They are drawing towards an equality, and on that field, too, in which equality is greatly most honourable. And we fondly hope, that the time is coming, when, in frank and frequent intercourse, we shall behold the ready exchange of confidence on the one side, and affection on the other—when the rich and the poor shall love each other more, just because they know each other more—when each party shall recognize the other to be vastly worthier of regard and of reverence than is now apprehended—when united by the sympathies of a common hope, and a common nature, and on a perfect level in all that is essential and characteristic of humanity, they shall, at length,

learn to live in love and peacefulness together, as the expectants of one common heaven—as the members of one common and rejoicing family.

But, to attain a just estimate of the superiority of the poor man who has wisdom, over the rich man who has it not, we must enter into the calculation of eternity—we must look to wisdom in its true essence, as consisting of religion, as having the fear of God for its beginning, and the rule of God for its way, and the favour of God for its full and satisfying termination—we must compute how speedily it is, that, on the wings of time, the season of every paltry distinction between them must, at length, pass away; how soon death will strip the one of his rags, and the other of his pageantry, and send them, in utter nakedness, to the dust; how soon judgment will summon them from their graves, and place them in outward equality before the great disposer of their future lot, and their future place, through ages which never end; how in that situation, the accidental distinctions of life will be rendered void, and personal distinctions will be all that shall avail them; how, when examined by the secrets of the inner man, and the deeds done in their

body, the treasure of heaven shall be adjudged only to him whose heart was set upon it in this world; and how tremendously the account between them will be turned, when it shall be found of the one that he must perish for lack of knowledge, and of the other, that he has the wisdom which is unto salvation.

And here it is of importance to remark, that to be wise as a Christian is wise, it is not essential to have that higher scholarship which wealth alone can purchase—that such is the peculiar adaptation of the Gospel to the poor, that it may be felt in the full force of its most powerful evidence, by the simplest of its hearers—that to be convinced of its truth, all which appears necessary is, to have a perception of sin through the medium of the conscience, and a perception of the suitableness of the offered Saviour through the medium of a revelation, plain in its terms, and obviously sincere and affectionate in its calls. Philosophy does not melt the conscience. Philosophy does not make luminous that which in itself is plain. Philosophy does not bring home, with greater impression upon the heart, the symptoms of honesty and good will, which abound in the New Testament. Prayer may do it. Moral earnestness may do it. The Spirit,

given to those who ask him, may shine with the light of his demonstration, on the docility of those little children, who are seeking, with their whole hearts, the way of peace, and long to have their feet established on the paths of righteousness. There is a learning, the sole fruit of which is a laborious deviation from the truth as it is in Jesus. And there is a learning which reaches no farther than to the words in which that truth is announced, and yet reaches far enough to have that truth brought home with power upon the understanding—a learning, the sole achievement of which, is to read the Bible, and yet by which the scholar is conducted to that hidden wisdom, which is his light in life, and his passport to immortality—a learning, which hath simply led the inquirer's way to that place, where the Holy Ghost hath descended upon him in rich effusion, and which, as he was reading, in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God, hath given them such a weight and such a clearness in his eyes, that they have become to him the words whereby he shall be saved. And thus it is, that in many a cottage of our land, there is a wisdom which is reviled, or unknown, in many of our halls of literature—there is the candle of the Lord shining in the hearts of those who fear him—there is a secret

revealed unto babes, which is hidden from the wise and the prudent—there is an eye which discerns, and a mind that is well exercised on the mysteries of the sure and the well-ordered covenant—there is a sense and a feeling of the preciousness of that cross, the doctrine of which is foolishness to those who perish—there is a ready apprehension of that truth, which is held at nought by many rich, and many mighty, and many noble, who will not be admonished—but which makes these poor to be rich in faith, and heirs of that kingdom which God hath prepared for those who love him.

We know not, if any who is now present, has ever felt the charm of an act of intercourse with a Christian among the poor—with one whose chief attainment is, that he knows the Bible to be true—and that his heart, touched and visited by a consenting movement to its doctrine, feels it to be precious. We shall be disappointed, if the very exterior of such a man do not bear the impress of that worth and dignity which have been stamped upon his character—if, in the very aspect and economy of his household, the traces of his superiority are not to be found—if the promise, even of the life that now is, be not conspicuously realized on the decent sufficiency

of his means, and the order of his well-conditioned family—if the eye of tasteful benevolence be not regaled by the symptoms of comfort and cheerfulness which are to be seen in his lowly habitation. And we shall be greatly disappointed, if, after having survived the scoff of companions, and run through the ordeal of nature's enmity, he do not earn, as the fruits of the good confession that he witnesses among his neighbours, the tribute of a warm and willing cordiality from them all—if, while he lives, he do not stand the first in estimation, and when he dies, the tears and acknowledgments of acquaintances, as well as of kinsfolk, do not follow him to his grave—if, even in the hearts of the most unholy around him, an unconscious testimony is not borne to the worth of holiness, so as to make even this world's honour one of the ingredients in the portion of the righteous. But these are the mere tokens and visible accompaniments of Christian excellence—the passing efflorescence of a growth that is opening and maturing for eternity. To behold this excellence in all its depth, and in all its solidity, you must examine his mind, and there see the vastly higher elements, with which it is conversant, than those among which the children of this world are grovelling—there see, how, in the hidden

walk of the inner man, he treads a more elevated path than is trodden either by the daughters of gaiety, or the sons of ambition—there see, how the whole greatness and imagery of heaven are present to his thoughts, and what a reach and nobleness of conception have gathered upon his soul, by his daily approaches to heaven's sanctuary. He lives in a cottage—and yet he is a king and priest unto God. He is fixed for life to the ignoble drudgery of a workman, and yet he is on the full march to a blissful immortality. He is a child in the mysteries of science, but familiar with greater mysteries. That preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to others, he feels to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God. That faithfulness which annexes to all the promises of the Gospel—that righteousness which is unto the believer—that fulness in Christ, out of which the supplies of light and of strength are ever made to descend on the prayers of all who put their trust in him—that wisdom of principle, and wisdom of application, by which, through his spiritual insight into his Bible, he is enabled both to keep his heart, and to guide the movements of his history,—these are his treasures—these are the elements of that moral wealth, by which he is far exalted above the monarch, who stalks his

little hour of magnificence on earth, and then descends a ghost of departed greatness into the land of condemnation. He is rich, just because the word of Christ dwells in him richly in all wisdom. He is great, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon him.

So that, the same conclusion comes back upon us with mightier emphasis than before. If a poor child be capable of being thus transformed, how it should move the heart of a city philanthropist, when he thinks of the amazing extent of raw material, for this moral and spiritual manufacture that is on every side of him—when he thinks, that in going forth on some Christian enterprise among a population, he is in truth, walking among the rudiments of a state that is to be everlasting—that out of their most loathsome and unseemly abodes, a glory can be extracted, which will weather all the storms, and all the vicissitudes of this world's history—that, in the filth and raggedness of a hovel, that is to be found, on which all the worth of heaven, as well as all the endurance of heaven, can be imprinted—that he is, in a word, dealing in embryo with the elements of a great and future empire, which is to rise, indestructible and eternal, on the ruins of all that is

earthly, and every member of which shall be a king and a priest for evermore.

And before I pass on to the application of these remarks, let me just state, that the great instrument for thus elevating the poor, is that Gospel of Jesus Christ, which may be preached unto the poor. It is the doctrine of his cross finding an easier admission into their hearts, than it does through those barriers of human pride, and human resistance, which are often reared on the basis of literature. Let the testimony of God be simply taken in, that on his own Son he has laid the iniquities of us all—and from this point does the humble scholar of Christianity pass unto light, and enlargement, and progressive holiness. On the reception of this great truth, there hinges the emancipation of his heart from a thraldom which represses all the spiritual energies of those who live without hope, and, therefore, live without God in the world. It is guilt—it is the sense of his awakened and unexpiated guilt, which keeps man at so wide a distance from the God whom he has offended. Could some method be devised, by which God, jealous of his honour, and man jealous of his safety, might be brought together on a firm ground of reconciliation—

it would translate the sinner under a new moral influence, to the power of which, and the charm of which, he, before, was utterly impracticable. Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. This is a truth, which, when all the world shall receive it, all the world will be renovated. Many do not see how a principle, so mighty in operation, should be enveloped in a proposition so simple of utterance. But let a man, by his faith in this utterance, come to know that God is his friend, and that heaven is the home of his fondest expectation; and in contact with such new elements as these, he will evince the reach, and the habit, and the desire of a new creature. It is this doctrine which is the alone instrument of God for the moral transformation of our species. When every demonstration from the chair of philosophy shall fail, this will achieve its miracles of light and virtue among the people—and however infidelity may now deride—or profaneness may now lift her appalling voice upon our streets—or licentiousness may now offer her sickening spectacles—or moral worthlessness may have now deeply tainted the families of our outcast and long-neglected population,—however unequal may appear the contest with the powers and the principles of darkness—yet let not the

teachers of righteousness abandon it in despair; God will bring forth judgment unto victory, and on the triumphs of the word of his own testimony, will he usher in the glory of the latter days.

There is one kind of institution that never has been set up in a country, without deceiving and degrading its people; and another kind of institution that never has been set up in a country, without raising both the comfort and the character of its families. We leave it to the policy of our sister kingdom, by the pomp and the pretension of her charities, to disguise the wretchedness which she cannot do away. The glory of Scotland lies in her schools. Out of the abundance of her moral and literary wealth, that wealth which communication cannot dissipate—that wealth which its possessor may spread and multiply among thousands, and yet be as affluent as ever—that wealth, which grows by competition, instead of being exhausted—this is what, we trust, she will be ever ready to bestow on all her people. Silver and gold she may have none—but such as she has she will give—she will send them to school. She cannot make pensioners of them—but will, if they like, make scholars of them. She will

give them of that food by which she nurses and sustains all her offspring—by which she renders wise the very poorest of her children—by which, if there be truth in our text, she puts into many a single cottager, a glory surpassing that of the mightiest potentates in our world. To hold out any other boon, is to hold out a promise which she and no country in the universe, can ever realize—it is to decoy, and then most wretchedly to deceive—it is to put on a front of invitation, by which numbers are allured to hunger, and nakedness, and contempt. It is to spread a table, and to hang out such signals of hospitality, as draw around it a multitude expecting to be fed, and who find that they must famish over a scanty entertainment. A system replete with practical mischief, can put on the semblance of charity, even as Satan, the father of all lying and deceitful promises, can put on the semblance of an angel of light. But we trust, that the country in which we live will ever be preserved from the cruelty of its tender mercies—that she will keep by her schools, and her Scriptures, and her moralizing process; and that, instead of vainly attempting so to force the exuberance of Nature, as to meet and satisfy the demands of a population, whom she has led astray, she will make it her constant aim

so to exalt her population, as to establish every interest that belongs to them, on the foundation of their own worth and their own capabilities—that taunted, as she has been, by her contemptuous neighbour, for the poverty of her soil, she will at least prove, by deed and by example, that it is fitted to sustain an erect, and honourable, and high-minded peasantry; and leaving England to enjoy the fatness of her own fields, and a complacency with her own institutions, that we shall make a clean escape from her error, and never again be entangled therein—that unseduced by the false lights of a mistaken philanthropy, and mistaken patriotism, we shall be enabled to hold on in the way of our ancestors; to ward off every near and threatening blight from the character of our beloved people; and so to labour with the manhood of the present, and the boyhood of the coming generation, as to enrich our land with that wisdom which is more precious than gold, and that righteousness which exalteth a kingdom.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE DUTY AND THE MEANS OF CHRISTIANIZING OUR HOME POPULATION.

MARK XVI. 15.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

CHRISTIANITY proceeds upon the native indisposition of the human heart to its truths and its lessons—and all its attempts for the establishment of itself in the world are made upon this principle. It never expects that men will, of their own accord, originate that movement by which they are to come in contact with the faith of the Gospel—and, therefore, instead of waiting till they shall move towards the Gospel, it has been provided, from the first, that the Gospel shall move towards them. The Apostles did not set up their stationary college at Jerusalem,

in the hope of embassies from a distance to inquire after the recent and wondrous revelation that had broke upon the world. But they had to go forth, and to preach among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And, in like manner, it never was looked for, that men, in the ardour of their curiosity, or desire after the way of salvation, were to learn the language of the Apostles, that they might come and hear of it at their mouth. But the Apostles were miraculously gifted with the power of addressing all in their own native language—and when thus furnished, they went actively and agressively about among them. It is no where supposed that the demand for Christianity is spontaneously, and in the first instance, to arise among those who are not Christians; but it is laid upon those who are Christians, to go abroad, and, if possible, to awaken out of their spiritual lethargy, those who are fast asleep in that worldliness, which they love, and from which, without some external application, there is no rational prospect of ever arousing them. The dead mass will not quicken into sensibility of itself—and, therefore, unless some cause of fermentation be brought to it from without, will it remain in all the sluggishness of its original nature. For there is an utter diversity between the article of Christian

instruction, and the articles of ordinary merchandise. For the latter there is a demand, to which men are natively and originally urged by hunger or by thirst, or by the other physical sensations and appetites of their constitution. For the former there is no natural appetite. It is just as necessary to create a spiritual hunger, as it is to afford a spiritual refreshment—and so from the very first, do we find, that for the spread of Christianity in the world, there had to be not an itinerancy on the part of inquirers, but a busy, active, and extended itinerancy on the part of its advocates and its friends.

Now, those very principles which were so obviously acted on at the beginning, are also the very principles that, in all ages of the church, have characterized its evangelizing processes. The Bible Society is now doing, by ordinary means, what was done by the miracle of tongues, in the days of the Apostles—enabling the people of all nations to read each in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God. And the Missionary Societies are sending forth, not inspired Apostles, gifted with tongues, but the expounders of apostolical doctrine, learned in tongues, over the face of the globe. They do not presume upon such a taste for the Gospel in heathen lands, as that the

people there shall traverse seas and continents, or shall set themselves down to the laborious acquisition of some Christian language, that they might either have access to Scripture, or the ability of converse with men that are skilled in the mysteries of the faith. But this taste which they do not find, they expect to create—and for this purpose, is there now an incessant application to Pagan countries, of means and instruments from without—and many are the lengthened and the hazardous journies which have been undertaken—and voyages of splendid enterprise have recently been crowned with splendid moral achievements; insomuch, that even the ferocity and licentiousness of the savage character have given way under the power of the truth; and lands, that within the remembrance of many now alive, rankled with the worst abominations of idolatry, have now exchanged them for the arts and the decencies of civilization; for village schools, and Christian Sabbaths, and venerable pastors, who first went forth as missionaries, and, as the fruits of their apostolic labour, among these outcast wanderers, can now rejoice over holy grandsires, and duteous children, and all that can gladden the philanthropic eye, in the peace, and purity, and comfort of pious families.

Now, amid the splendour and the interest of these more conspicuous operations, it is often not adverted to, how much work of a missionary character is indispensable for perpetuating, and still more for extending Christianity at home—how families, within the distance of half-a-mile, may lapse, without observation or sympathy on our part, into a state of practical heathenism—how, within less than an hour's walk, hundreds may be found, who morally and spiritually live at as wide a separation from the Gospel, and all its ordinances, as do the barbarians of another continent—how, in many of our crowded recesses, the families, which, out of sight, and out of Christian sympathy, have accumulated there, might, at length, sink and settle down into a listless, and lethargic, and, to all appearance, impracticable population—leaving the Christian teacher as much to do with them, as has the first missionary when he touches on a yet unbroken shore. It is vain to expect, that by a proper and primary impulse originating with themselves, those aliens from Christianity will go forth on the inquiry after it. The messengers of Christianity must go forth upon them. Many must go to and fro amongst the streets, and the lanes, and those deep intricacies, that teem with human life, to

an extent far beyond the eye or imagination of the unobservant passenger, if we are to look for the increase either of a spiritual taste, or of scriptural knowledge among the families. That mass which is so dense of mind, and, therefore, so dense of immortality, must be penetrated in the length and in the breadth of it; and then many will be found, who, however small their physical distance from the sound of the Gospel, stand at as wide a moral distance therefrom, as do the children of the desert—and to overpass *this* barrier, to send out upon this outfield, such ministrations as might reclaim its occupiers to the habits and the observations of a Christian land, to urge and obtrude, as it were, upon the notice of thousands, what, without such an advancement, not one of them might have moved a footstep in quest of—these are so many approximations, that, to all intents and purposes, have in them the character, and might, with the blessing of God, have also the effect of a missionary enterprise.

When we are commanded to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, our imagination stretches forth beyond the limits of Christendom; and we advert not to the millions who are within these limits, nay,

within the sight of Christian temples, and the sound of Sabbath bells, yet who never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They live to manhood, and to old age, deplorably ignorant of the way of salvation, and in ignorance, too, not the less deplorable that it is wilful. It is this which so fearfully aggravates their guilt, that, on the very confines of light, they remain in darkness; and thereby prove, that it is a darkness which they love, and which they choose to persist in. Thus it will be found more tolerable for the heathen abroad, than for the heathen at home—and therefore it is, that for the duty of our text, the wilds of Pagan idolatry, or of Mahometan delusion, are not the only theatres—that for its full performance, it is not enough that we equip the missionary vessel, and go in quest of untaught humanity at a distance, and hold converse with the men of other climes, and of other tongues, and rear on some barbarous shore, the Christianized village, as an outpost in that spiritual warfare, by which we hope, at length, to banish depravity and guilt, even from the farthest extremities of our species. These are noble efforts, and altogether worthy of being extended and multiplied a hundred fold. But they are not the only efforts of Christian philanthropy—nor can they be sustained as a complete

discharge from the obligation of preaching the Gospel to every creature under heaven. For the accomplishment of this, there must not only be a going forth on the vast and untrodden spaces that are without; there must be a filling up of the numerous and peopled vacancies that are within—a busy, internal locomotion, that might circulate, and disperse, and branch off to the right and to the left, among the many thousand families which are at hand: And thoroughly to pervade these families; to make good a lodgment in the midst of them, for the nearer or the more frequent ministrations of Christianity than before; to have gained welcome for the Gospel testimony into their houses, and, in return, to have drawn any of them forth to attendance on the place of Sabbath and of solemn services—this, also, is to act upon our text, this is to do the part, and to render one of the best achievements of a missionary.

"How can they believe," says Paul, "without a preacher,"—and "how can they preach, except they be sent?" To make sure this process, there must be a juxtaposition between him who declares the word, and them who are addressed by it—but to make good this juxtaposition, the Apostle never imagines that aliena-

ted man is, of his own accord, to move towards the preacher—and, therefore, that the preacher must be sent, or must move towards him. And, perhaps, it has not been adverted to, that in the very first steps of this approximation, there is an encouragement for going onward, and for plying the families of a city population with still nearer and more besetting urgencies than before. It is not known how much the very juxtaposition of an edifice for worship, tells upon the church-going habit of the contiguous householders—how many there are who will not move at the sound of a distant bell, that with almost mechanical sureness, will go forth, and mingle with the stream of passengers, who are crowding the way to a place that is at hand—how children, lured, perhaps, at the first, by curiosity, are led so to reiterate their attendance, as to be landed in a most precious habit for youth and for manhood—how this tendency spreads by talk, and sympathy, and imitation, through each little vicinity; and thus, in groupes, or in clusters, might adjoining families be gained over to the ordinances of religion—how the leaven, when once set a-going, might spread by the fermentation of converse, and mutual sentiment, through the whole lump; till over the face of a whole city department, the Christian

fabric, which stands conspicuously in the midst of it, and whither its people are rung every Sabbath, to the ministrations of the Gospel, might come to be its place of general repair; and attendance there be at length proceeded on as one of the decencies of its established observation. Some of the influences in this process may appear slight or fanciful to the superficial eye—and yet they are known, and familiarly known, to be of powerful operation. You must surely be aware, that it makes all the practical difference in the world, to the retail and custom even of an ordinary shop, should it deviate, by a very small hairbreadth, from the minutest convenience of the public—should it retire, by ever so little from the busy pavement, or have to be ascended by two or three steps, or require the slightest turn and change of direction from that beaten path which passengers do inveterately walk in. And human nature on a week-day, is human nature on the Sabbath. There is no saying on how slight or trivial a circumstance it may be made to turn—and odd as the illustration may appear, we feel confident that we have not, at present, either a profound or a pious hearer, who will undervalue one single stepping-stone, by which a hearer more might be brought to the house of God—who

will despise any of the means, however humble, that bring a human creature within the reach of that word; which is able to sanctify and save him—who will forget the wonted style of God's administrations, by which, on these minutest incidents of life, the greatest events of history are oft suspended—or, who will deny that the same Being, who, by the flight of a single bird, turned the pursuers of Mahomet away from him, and so spared the instrument by which a gross and grievous superstition hath found an ascendancy over millions of immortal spirits, that he can enlist in the cause of his own Son, even the least and slightest familiarities of human practice; and with links, which in themselves are exceeding small, can fasten and uphold the chain, which runs through the earthly pilgrimage of man, and reaches to his eternity.

But after all, though local conveniency may allure, in the first instance, to the house of God, local conveniency will not detain the attendance of multitudes, unless there be a worth and a power in the services which are rendered there—unless there be a moral earnestness in the heart of the preacher, which may pour forth a sympathy with itself through the hearts of a listening congregation—unless, acquitting himself as

an upright minister of the New Testament, he expound with faithfulness, and some degree of energy, those truths which are unto salvation; and so distribute among his fellow-sinners, the alone substantial and satisfying food of the soul—unless such a demonstration be given of the awful realities in which we deal, as to awaken in many bosoms the realizing sense of death, and of the judgment-seat—and, above all, unless the demands of the law, with its accompanying severities and terrors, be so urged on the conviction of guilty man, as to make it fall with welcome upon his ear, when told, that unto him a Saviour has been born. These are the alone elements of a rightful and well-earned popularity. Eloquence may dazzle—and argument may compel the homage of its intellectual admirers—and fashion may even, when these are wanting, sustain through its little hour of smile and of sunshine, a complacent attendance on the reigning idol of the neighbourhood—but it is only if armed with the panoply of scriptural truth, that there will gather and adhere to him a people who hunger for the bread of life, and who make a business of their eternity. To fill the church well, we must fill the pulpit well, and see that the articles of the peace-speaking blood, and the sanctifying Spirit, are the topics

'that be dearest to the audience, and on which the Christian orator who addresses them most loves to expatiate. These form the only enduring staple of good and vigorous preaching; and unless they have a breadth, and a prominency, and a fond reiteration in the sermons that shall be delivered from the place where we now stand,* they either will not, or ought not to be listened to.

Yet grieved and disappointed should we be, did he confine himself to Sabbath ministrations —did he not go forth, and become the friend and the Christian adviser of all who dwell within the limits of his vineyard—did he not act the part of an Apostle among you, from house to house, and vary the fatigue of his preparations for the pulpit, by a daily walk amongst the ignorant, or the sick, or the sorrowful, or the dying. It is your part to respect, as you would a sanctuary, that solitude to which, for hours together, he should commit himself, in the work of meditating the truths of salvation—and it is his part to return your delicacy by his labours of love, by the greetings of his cordial fellow-

* This Sermon was preached at the opening of a city chapel, which has a local district assigned to it, and whose rule of seat-letting is on the territorial principle.

ship, by his visits of kindness. It is a wrong imagination on the side of a people, when they look on the Sabbath for a vigorous exposition of duty or doctrine, from him whom they teaze, and interrupt, and annoy, through the week—and it is a wrong imagination on the side of a pastor, when looking on the church as the sole arena of his usefulness, he does not relax the labour of a spirit that has been much exercised on the great topics of the Christian ministry, by frequent and familiar intercourse among those, whom, perhaps, he has touched or arrested by his Sabbath demonstrations. You ought to intrude not upon his arrangements and his studies; but he ought, in these arrangements, to provide the opportunities of ample converse with every spiritual patient, with every honest inquirer. You should be aware of the distinction that he makes between that season of the day which is set apart for retirement, and that season of the day which lies open to the duty of holding courteous fellowship with all—and of hiding not himself from his own flesh. It is the gross insensibility which obtains to the privileges both of a sacred and literary order—it is the disturbance of a perpetual inroad on that prophet's chamber, which ought, at all times, to be a safe retreat of contemplation—it is the incessant struggle that must be made for a professional

existence, with irksome application, and idle ceremony, and even the urgencies of friendship—these are sufficient to explain those pulpit imbecilities, of which many are heard to complain, while themselves they help to create them. And, therefore, if you want to foster the energies of your future clergyman; if you would co-operate with him in those mental labours, by which he provides through the week for the repast of your Sabbath festival; if it is your desire that an unction and a power shall be felt in all his pulpit ministrations; if here you would like to catch a glow of heaven's sacredness, and receive that fresh and forcible impulse upon your spirits, which might send you forth again with a redoubled ardour of holy affection and zeal on the business of life, and make you look and long for the coming Sabbath, as another delightful resting-place on your journey towards Zion—then suffer him to breathe, without molestation, in that pure and lofty region, where he might inhale a seraphic fervency, by which to kindle among his hearers his own celestial fire, his own noble enthusiasm. If it be this, and not the glee of companionship, or the drudgeries of ordinary clerkship that you want from your minister, then leave, I beseech you, his time in his own hand, and hold his asylum to be unviolable.

But, we trust, that from this asylum his excursions will be frequent—and sure we are, that nought but an affectionate forthgoing is necessary on his part, that he may have a warm and a willing reception upon yours. It is utterly a mistake, that any population, whatever be their present habits, will discourage the approaches of a Christian minister to their families. It is a particularly wrong imagination, that in cities there is a hard or an insolent defiance among the labouring classes, which no assiduities of service or of good-will on the part of their clergyman can possibly overcome. Let him but try what their temperament is in this matter, and he will find it in every way as courteous and inviting, as among the most primitive of our Scottish peasantry. Let him be but alert to every call of threatening disease among his people, and the ready attendant upon every death-bed—let him ply not his fatiguing, but his easy and most practicable rounds of visitation in the midst of them—let him be zealous for their best interests, and not in the spirit of a fawning obsequiousness, but in that of a manly, intelligent, and honest friendship, let him stand forth as the guardian of the poor, the guide and the counsellor of their children; it is positively not in human nature to withstand the charm

and the power which lie in such unwearied ministrations—and if visibly prompted by the affinity that there is in the man's heart for his fellows of the species, there will, by a law of the human constitution, be an affinity in theirs towards him, which they cannot stifle, though they would; and they will have no wish to stifle it.

It is to this principle, little as it has been recognized, and still less as it has been proceeded on, it is to this that we confide the gathering at length of a congregation within these walls, and that too from the vicinities by which we are immediately surrounded. That the chapel will be filled at the very outset, from the district which has been assigned to it, we have no expectation. But we do fondly hope, as the fruit of his unwearied services, that its minister will draw the kind regards of the people after him; that an impression will be made by his powerful and reiterated addresses in the bosom of their families, which may not stop there; that the man who prays at every funeral, and sits by every dying bed, and seizes every opening for Christian usefulness that is afforded to him by the visitations of Providence on the houses of the surrounding neighbourhood, and who, while a

fit companion for the great in his vineyard, is a ready, and ever accessible friend to the poorest of them all—it is utterly impossible, that such a man, after his work of varied and active benevolence, will have nought to address on the Sabbath but empty walls. After being the eye-witness of what he does, there will spring up a most natural desire, and that cannot be resisted, to hear what he says. It is not yet known how much such attentions as these, kept up, and made to play in busy and constant recurrence upon one local neighbourhood—it is not yet known how much and how powerfully they tell in drawing the hearts of the people towards him who faithfully and with honest friendship, discharges them. They will make the pulpit which he fills a common centre of attraction to the whole territory over which he expatiates—and we need not that we may see exemplified in human society, the worth and importance of the pastoral relationship, we need not go alone among the sequestered vales, or the far and upland retreats of our country parishes. It is not a local phenomenon dependent on geography. It is a general one, dependent on the nature of man; on those laws of the heart, which no change of place or of circumstances can obliterate. To gain the moral ascendancy of which we speak,

it is enough if the upright and laborious clergyman have human feelings and human families on every side of him. It signifies not where. Give him Christian kindness, and this will pioneer a way for him amongst all the varieties of place and of population. Beside the smoke, and the din, and the dizzying wheel of crowded manufactories, will he find as ready an introduction for himself and for his office, as if his only walk had been among peaceful hamlets, and with nought but the romance and the rusticity of nature spread out before him. It is utterly a wrong imagination, and in the face both of experience and of prophecy, that in towns there is an impracticable barrier against the capabilities and the triumphs of the Gospel—that in towns the cause of human amelioration must be abandoned in despair—that in towns it is not by the architecture of chapels, but by the architecture of prisons, and of barracks, and of bridewells, we are alone to seek for the protection of society—that elsewhere a moralizing charm may go forth among the people, from village schools and sabbath services, but that there is a hardihood and a ferocity in towns, which must be dealt with in another way, and against which all the artillery of the pulpit is feeble as infancy—that a foul and a feverish depravity has settled there,

which no spiritual application will ever extinguish: For amid all the devisings for the peace and order of our community, do we find it to be the shrewd and sturdy apprehension of many, that all which can be achieved in our overgrown cities, is by the strength of the secular arm; that a stern and vigorous police will do more for public morals, than a whole band of ecclesiatics; that a periodical execution will strike a more salutary terror into the hearts of the multitude, than do the dreadest fulminations of the preacher's voice—and this will explain the derision and the distrust wherewith that argument is listened to, which goes to set forth the efficacy of Christian doctrine, or to magnify the office of him who delivers it.

We can offer no computation that will satisfy such antagonists as these, of the importance of Christianity even to the civil and the temporal well-being of our species; and we shall, therefore, plead the authority of our text, for extending its lessons to every creature—for going forth with it to every haunt and every habitation where immortal beings are to be found—for not merely carrying it beyond the limits of Christendom, but for filling up with instruction the many blank, and vacant, and still unoccupied

places, teeming with population, that, even within these limits have not been overtaken. What! shall we be told, that if there is a man under heaven, whom the Gospel has not yet reached, it is but obedience to a last and solemn commandment, when the missionary travels even to the farthest verge of our horizon, that he may bear it to his door—shall we be told of the thousands who are beside us, that, though their souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, we might, without one care or one effort abandon them? Are we to give up as desperate, the Christian reformation of our land, when we read of those mighty achievements, and those heavenly outpourings, by which even the veriest wilds of heathenism have been fertilized—or, with such an instrument to work by as that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which in the hands of the Spirit of God hath wrought its miracles on the men of all ages, shall we forbear, as a hopeless enterprize, the evangelizing of our own homes, the eternal salvation of our own families? "Be of good cheer," says the Spirit to the apostle, "I have much people for thee in this city;" and that, a city, too, the most profligate and abandoned that ever flourished on the face of our world. And still the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot

save. Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. It is open as ever to the cry of your intercessions—and on these, we would devolve our cause. We entreat the fellowship of your prayers. We know, that all human exertion, and eloquence, and wisdom, are vain, without them—that, lacking that influence, which is gotten down by supplications from on high, sermons are but high-sounding cymbals, and churches but naked architecture—that mere pains are of no avail, and that it only lies within the compass of pains and of prayers, to do any thing.

And we, indeed, have great reason for encouragement, when we think of the subject of our message. When we are bidden in the text to preach, it is to preach the Gospel—it is to proclaim good news in the hearing of the people—it is to sound forth what surely must be felt welcome by many—it is to sound forth the glad tidings of great joy—it is to tell even the chief of sinners, that God is now willing to treat him as a sinner no longer; that he invites him to all the honours of righteousness; and that in virtue of a blood which cleanseth from all sin, and of an obedience, to the rewards of which he is freely and fully invited, there is not a guil-

ty creature in our world, who may not draw nigh. Should he who preaches within these walls, turn out the faithful and the energetic expounder of this word of salvation—should the blessing of God be upon his ways, and that demonstration which cometh from on high, accompany his words—should he, filled with zeal in the high cause of your immortality, be instant among you in season, and out of season—and devoted to the work of his sacred ministry, he make it his single aim to gather in a harvest of unperishable spirits, that by him as an instrument of grace, have been rescued from hell, and raised to a blissful eternity—should this be indeed the high walk of his unremitting toil, and his unwearied perseverance—then, such is the power of the divine testimony, when urged out of the fulness of a believer's heart, and made to fall with the impression of his undoubted sincerity on those whom he addresses; that for ourselves we shall have no fear of a good and a glorious issue to this undertaking—and, therefore, as Paul often cast the success of his labours on the prayers of them for whom he laboured, would I again entreat that your supplications do ascend to the throne of grace for him who is to minister amongst you in word and in doctrine—that he may, indeed, be a pas-

tor according to God's own heart, who shall feed a people here with knowledge and with spiritual understanding—that the travail of his soul may be blest to the conversion of many sons and daughters unto righteousness—that he may prove a comfort to all your hearts, and a great public benefit to all your families.

SERMON XV.

ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND CONSIDERATION.

ISAIAH I. 3.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

It would appear, from this verse, that the children of Israel neither knew nor considered—but still there is a distinction suggested by it between these two things. And in the book of the prophet Malachi, we have a similar distinction, when the Lord says to the priests, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart." It is, in fact, possible for a man to do one of these things, and not to do the other. He may know the truth, and yet he may not consider it. He may hear, and yet not lay to heart. Nay, he may have heard of a particular

doctrine so often as to have got it by heart, without ever laying it to heart. And this, we hold, to be the just and the applicable complaint that may be uttered of many professing Christians in our day.

And thus it is, that we may gather the difference which there is between knowledge and wisdom. The one is a speculative acquirement. The other is a practical faculty or habit. By the latter, we turn to its right and profitable use the former. Thus it is, that there may be great folly along with great scholarship—and, on the other hand, may an unlettered mind be illustrious in wisdom. You have, perhaps, seen when there was great wealth, and yet, from the want of judicious management, great want of comfort in a family—and what stands in fine and beautiful contrast with this, you may have witnessed the union of very humble means, with such a skill and consideration in the guidance of them, as to have yielded a respectable appearance, and a decent hospitality, and the sufficiency of a full and regular provision. And so, with the treasures of intellect, the acquisitions of the mind, whereof one may be rich, being possessed of most ample materials in all knowledge and information, and yet have an ill-conditioned

mind notwithstanding; and another destitute of all but the most common and elementary truths, may yet, by a wise application of them, have attained to the true light and harmony of the soul, and be in sound preparation both for the duties of time, and for the delights of eternity.

All have so learned to number their days as to know the extreme limit of human life upon earth—yet all have not so learned to number their days as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. They are aware of their latter end, but they consider not their latter end.

I. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom, is abundantly realized even on the field of earthly and of sensible experience. The man of dissipation may have his eyes open to the ruin of character and of fortune that awaits him, yet the tyranny of his evil desires constrains him to a perseverance in the ways of wretchedness. The man of indolence may foresee the coming bankruptcy that will ensue on the slovenly management of his affairs, yet there is a lethargy within that weighs him down to fatal inactivity. The man of prone and headlong irritation, may be able to discern the accumu-

lating mischief that he raises against himself in the hostility of those who are around him, and may even look forward to the time when, deserted by the friendship of all, he shall live a neglected outcast from all human companionship; yet, continue as before to be hurried away by the onward violence that seizes him. In all these instances, there is no want of knowledge in possession. But there is a want of knowledge in use, or knowledge in application. The unhappy man has the truth of the matter in his head. But he does not lay it with the authority of a commander upon his practice. The present urgency carries it over all thought of the future consequences. He has received the truth, but he does not give heed unto the truth. He does not charge it upon his attention, or give effectual warning of it to his fears, or to his sense of prudence and of interest. It is not of his ignorance that we complain, but of his inconsideration. And thus, apart from the things of spiritual contemplation altogether, and on the mere ground of every day life, with its passions and pursuits in this world, may the distinction to which we now advert, be abundantly exemplified.

II. But what we have now affirmed, even of

those events and consequences that take place along the journey of this world, is still more strikingly apparent of that great event which marks its termination. There is not a human creature of most ordinary mind, and who hath overstepped the limits of infancy, that does not know of death, and with whom it does not rank among the most undoubted of the certainties that await him. And it is not only that of which he is most thoroughly assured—but it is that of which, in the course of observation and history, he is most constantly reminded. And many are the aids and the accompaniments which might serve to deepen his impression of it. The horror of every death that he witnesses; and the pathos of every death which he deplores; and the distress, even unto the measure of tragic sensibility, which is felt when some tie of near and affecting relationship is broken; and every act of attendance on those last obsequies, when acquaintances meet to carry one of their number to his grave; and the aspect of seriousness that gathers upon every inquiring neighbourhood, when the word spreads that some one of their friends is dying; and the frequency of those funeral processions that pass along our streets, and so mingle the business of death with the moving throng of the people and the carriages, which the business of life has

pressed into its service—these are the remembrancers that ever and anon hold up the lesson of our mortality, and, one might think, should effectually keep it from sinking for a single hour into oblivion. But how is it truly and experimentally? That death of which we all know so well, is scarcely ever in our thoughts. The momentary touch of grief, and of seriousness, wherewith we are at times visited, speedily goeth into utter dissipation. With as cheerful and assured footsteps, do we tread the face of this world, as if it were the scene of our immortality—and the latter end of life is totally unseen in the obscure and undefined distance at which we have placed it, on the field of our contemplations. It argues for the strength of that recoil with which nature shrinks from the thought of its own dissolution, that all these loud and repeated demonstrations pass so unheeded by—and that walking though we be, over the accumulated ruins of so many generations, we nevertheless will talk as merrily, and lift up our heads as securely, as though beings who were to live for ever. It seems not to work the slightest abatement in the eagerness of man after this world's interests, that a few years will sweep them utterly away—and when we look to the busy engrossment of all his faculties with the

plans and the pursuits of earthliness, it is but too manifest, that it is one thing to know of death, and another to consider of it.

This heedlessness of our latter end, is of a character still more obstinate and incurable than any such heedlessness as we have already quoted, of reputation or fortune in the world. It needs no impetuous appetite to overbear the thought of death; for in the calm equanimity of many a sober and aged citizen, you will find him as profoundly asleep to the feeling of his own mortality, as he is to any of the feelings or instigations of licentiousness. It needs no overweighing indolence of temperament to be all listless and unmoved by the fears of our coming death-bed; for many are to be found, who consume every hour in the activities of business and of daring adventure, without one emotion of seriousness on the awful catastrophe that awaits them. It needs no imprudence, or unguarded violence, to betray a man into the forgetfulness of death; for many is the cool and practised calculator, and many is the sage of tranquil philosophy, and many is the crafty politician, who can look far into consequences, and is skilled in all the expedients of his vocation—and of whom it may be said, that the mind of each is steeped in the oblivion of death. We

are heedless of much that is before us, even in this world; but as to its last and closing scene, there is a peculiar inveteracy of heedlessness that we do not have as to any of the other futurities of our earthly existence. Death is the stepping-stone between the two worlds; and so it somewhat combines the palpable of matter, with the shadowy and the evanescent of spirit. It is the gateway to a land of mystery and of silence, and seems to gather upon it something of the visionary character which the things of faith have to the eye of the senses. It is not a thing unseen; but being an outlet to the region of invisibles, there settles upon it a degree of that faintness and obscurity wherewith the carnal eye regards all that is told of the matters of eternity. And so, amid all the varieties of temperament in our species, there is a universal heedlessness of death. It seems against the tendency of nature to think of it. There is an opposite bias that ever inclines us away from this dark contemplation, towards the warm and living realities of the peopled world around us. The mind refuses to dwell on that dreary abode of skulls and of sepulchres, and makes its willing escape from all this hideous imagery, to society, and to business, and to the whole interest and variety of life. Instead of some mighty

impulse being required to dispossess us of the thought, it costs an effort of unnatural violence to uphold it in our bosoms. The thing is known, but it is not considered: and the giddy dance of life is carried onwards, as if there were no destroyer upon the way—the tide of human existence is borne as restlessly along, as if there were no grave to absorb it.

This might serve to convince us, how unavailing is the mere knowledge, even of important truth, if not accompanied by the feeling, or the practical remembrance of it. The knowledge, in this case, only serves to aggravate our folly, and to bring, on the utter heedlessness of our lives, a more full and emphatic condemnation. And on the subject of death, we would ask, how is it that your fatal insensibility can be justified? Has God left this matter without a witness? Has he not strewed the whole path of your existence in the world with the mementos of its affecting termination? Has he not pointed the eye of your experience to the agonies of many a death-bed, and brought it irresistibly down upon your convictions, that these are the very agonies through which you have to pass? In every death of an acquaintance does he not lift a voice of warning unto yourselves—and when

that acquaintance is a relative or a friend, does he not seek to grave upon your softened heart the lesson of mortality in characters of deeper remembrance? Has he not tried to find access for the truth, through the varied avenues of feeling, and of observation, and of conscience? And living, as you do, in the land of dying men, have you not seen enough of this world's changes to make the history of your life one continued sermon upon the grave? God has not been wanting in those demonstrations of Providence, which should have rivetted a seriousness upon your hearts, and transformed you out of the careless, and gay, and worldly creature that you still are. We protest, by the many sick-beds over which you have hung, and by the deaths which you have witnessed, and by the tears which you have shed over them, that you have long ago had enough to loosen your hold upon earth, and to break that accursed spell by which you are so bound to its lying vanities. You have enough to dislodge from your bosom the spirit of the god of this world; and O! therefore, that you were wise, that you understood these things, that you considered your latter end.

There is no topic on which the distinction that there is between knowledge and considera-

tion stands more palpably before us, than that of death. All are assured of its coming, yet how few so bethink, or so bestir themselves, as to be prepared for its coming. The position which this event occupies in the line of our existence, gives to it a peculiar advantage for illustrating the distinction in question. It stands on the extreme horizon of what is sensible, and beyond it lie the dimness and the mystery of an untrodden land. On this side of it are the matters of experience. On the other side of it are the matters of faith. Now, it partakes with the one in the certainty wherewith all must regard it; and it partakes with the other in the nullity of its practical influence, over the vast majority of our species. As an object of knowledge, there belongeth to it the assurance of a most unquestioned truth; as an object of consideration, there belongeth to it the airy lightness of a vain and visionary fable. It is believed, but it is not minded; and while, on the one hand, it ranks among those experimental realities which are most assuredly known, it, on the other hand, ranks among those illusions of the fancy which are practically and habitually disregarded. It stands forth to the eye in all the plainness of ocular demonstration, and yet with as little power as if it were a tale of necromancy. It is

quite obvious, that in the things of faith, there is a want of ascendant power over the life of man; and, to justify man, this has been ascribed to their want of evidence. But where is the want of evidence in death? This is not a thing of faith, but a thing of observation; and makes it as clear as day, that even when the evidence is complete and irresistible, the effect may be as utterly unsubstantial, as if it were a thing of nought. This ought to alarm us. It should lead us to apprehend, that there was enough of argument, on the side even of what is spiritual and unseen, to condemn our indifference to it. If the certainty of death do not move us, it may not be the uncertainty of what is on the other side of death, that can account for the sluggishness of our obstinate and unmoved carnality. One thing is certain, that we can see an acquaintance fall into his grave, and yet continue to live here, as if this were our eternity. And does not this make it probable, that though that acquaintance were to rise again, and to tell us of the world of spirits upon which he had entered, we should be unaffected as before by the real eternity that is awaiting us? Christ says to us himself, that if we believe not Moses and the prophets, neither should we believe though one rose from the dead. This is the way in which

we meet the demand of infidelity, for more of proof, and more of information. The fact is, that thousands have died before us, and are still dying around us, and yet the heart of man remains unvisited by any practical sense of his mortality. And the presumption, therefore, is, that though one of these thousands were to revive, and to re-appear amongst us, fraught with the tidings of heaven's glory, and hell's unutterable despair, we should still keep our ground against him, and the heart of man be unvisited as before, by any practical sense of his immortality. It is not more of evidence that we want. There is as much as ought to convince us now—and if not convinced, there is as much as will condemn us afterwards. The cause of our irreligion is not that we could not know, but that we do not, and will not consider.

This is a great practical use to which our insensibility about death is capable of being turned. It proves, that our insensibility about eternal things, may be due to something else than to the defect of that evidence by which they are accompanied. It causes us to perceive, that a truth may be surely known, and yet not be pondered, or not be proceeded upon. Surely to know it is one thing—seriously to reflect upon it

is another—and thus it may be, that the irreligion of the world is due not to the want of a satisfying demonstration on God's part, for this might have excused us; but, to the want of right consideration on ours, and this is inexcusable.

III. Let us now pass onwards, then, to the invisibles of faith—to those things which do not, like death, stand upon the confines of the spiritual region, but are wholly within that region, and which man hath not seen by his eye, or heard by his ear—to the awful realities that will abide in deep and mysterious concealment from us, so long as we are in the body, and which not till the body is dissolved, will stand in direct manifestation before us. This character of unseen and spiritual, is not confined to things future. There are things present which are spiritual also. There is a present Deity, who dwelleth in light, it is true, but it is light inaccessible—who is encompassed with glory, but it is glory which we, in the body, cannot approach unto—who stands revealed to angels and adoring spirits; but whom no man hath seen, neither can see. He is the King eternal and immortal, but he is also the King invisible—who, though not far from any one of us, is remote as infinity itself, from the ken of our earthly senses

—and shrouded in the obscurity of his own unfathomable nature, is he so veiled and darkened from all human contemplation, that we cannot behold him.

And yet, even of this great Spirit we may be said, in one sense, to know, however little it is that we may consider him. There are averments about God which we have long recognized, and ranked among our admitted propositions, though we seldom recur to them in thought, and are never adequately impressed by them. We know, or think we know, that God is; and that all other existence is suspended upon his will; and that, were it not for his upholding arm, the whole of Nature would go into dissolution; and that while he sits in high authority over all worlds, there is not one individual member of his vast family, that is overlooked by him—and, more particularly, that he looks with the eye of a wise and a watchful judge, into every heart, and every conscience; and that he claims a right and a property in the services of all his creatures; and that he is more absolutely the owner and the master of them all, than is man of the machine that he hath made, and to whose touch all its movements are subordinate; and that he is a God of august and unviolable sacredness, in

whose presence evil cannot dwell, and between the sanctity of whose nature and sin, there is a wide and implacable enmity; and that he does not sit in lofty and remote indifference to the characters of his children, but takes deep, and perpetual, and most vigilant concern in them all—loving their righteousness, hating their iniquity, treasuring their thoughts, and their purposes, and their doings, in the book of his remembrance; and that, with a view to the manifestation of them, on that day, when time shall be no more, and each of his accountable offspring shall have their condition awarded to them through eternity—when the mystery of God shall be finished, and the glory of his attributes shall be made to shine forth at the close and the consummation of all things.

Now, most of these things you know, or profess to know. They are recognized by you as true propositions, and not to have them among the articles of your creed, would be deemed by you as monstrous and revolting infidelity. Most of you would shudder at the thought of an atheism, which could deny the existence of God, or of a blasphemy that could disown his government, or of a heresy that could profane his character by stripping it of its truth, and

justice, and holiness. So dear, in fact, are your long-established notions of the Divinity, that you could not bear them to be meddled with—and would hold that man to be the enemy of your repose, who should offer to violate them. So that, there do exist in your mind certain positions which regard a Deity, the affirmative of which carries your consent, and the denial of which would be painfully offensive to you—and thus far may you be said to know God, and to believe in him.

Now, as a proof how distinct this knowledge of God is from the consideration of him, I will venture to say, that even the first and simplest of all these propositions is, by many, unthought of for days and weeks together. The truth, that God is, which all here present would shudder to deny, is out of habitual regard, and habitual remembrance. It lies like a forgotten thing in some deep and latent depository—and as to its being brought forth of its hiding-place, for hourly use and meditation, this we never meet with, but among a saintly and selected few, who are indeed a very peculiar people. When God is acknowledged, we cannot lift the charge of theoretical atheism; but when, along with this, God is unminded, surely then may we lift the

charge of practical atheism. Now this is the very charge that we prefer against the vast majority of our world. They have a knowledge of God; but this, so far from extenuating their thoughtlessness, brings upon it its most fearful aggravation. It is just because they stand pre-eminent among the creatures of our world, in the faculty of understanding God, that they also stand pre-eminent in the crime of their ungodliness. It is for this, that they suffer in the comparison with "the ox that knoweth his owner, and the ass that knoweth his master's crib"—and what they have learned of God, or are capable of learning, will bring upon their heedlessness of him, and of his ways, its severest condemnation.

It is, indeed, one of the most fearful mysteries of the human spirit, that a truth which, of all others, most intimately concerns us, should yet, of all others, be the most gladly bidden away into oblivion—that, as rid of an unwelcome visitor, the mind of man is never more at ease, or in its kindred and rejoicing element, than when God is not in all his thoughts—that then it is, when, as broken loose from imprisonment, the heart revels in its own desires, and securely blesses its deliverance from the hateful presence

of one who constrained and overawed it—that the creature should thus hide itself, as it were, from the Creator, and in virtue of his perpetual recoil from the Being who formed, and who upholds him, should so keep up a perpetual distance from God—that wholly given over to the idolatry of the things that are made, the Maker should, to him, be little better than a nonentity, or a name—this is the marvel of the strange and wayward nature that belongs to us, and may well lead us to apprehend the visitation upon it of some sore leprosy, the shock of some great and total derangement.

For what truth of weightier import to us all than simply that there is a God—that all the busy and unceasing movements around us are suspended on the will of a living Sovereign—that those mighty forces which constantly uphold the play and the mechanism of things, are not the random energies of a Nature that is unconscious; but that one sitteth above, and wieldeth them all at his pleasure—that a powerful and a presiding intelligence hath originated all, and overrules all—and that while our only converse and concern are with the near and the visible, that are on every side of us, there is an unseen Spirit, to whom belongeth the mastery, and

with whom alone it is that we have mainly and substantially to do?

Now, how is it that man practically responds to this real condition of his being? Tell me, from the intimate assurances of your own conscience, or tell me, from the broad and palpable character that sits upon the doings of your acquaintances, whether God hath the ascendency over them. Is there, all the day long, a felt solemnity on your spirits, because of God, which follows you whithersoever you go, and causes you to walk with him in the world? Or, are you familiarized with the habit of submitting your will to his will? Or, have you ever, for an hour together, looked upon yourselves in the light of being the servants of another, and have accordingly run and laboured as at the bidding of that other? Or, utter strangers to this, do you not walk in the counsel of your own heart? Do you not move as independently, as if in yourself it was that you lived, and moved, and had your being? In the work that you prosecute, and the comforts that you enjoy, and even the obligations of which you acquit yourselves to relatives, and to friends, is there any fear of God before your eyes?—and is not the fear of disgrace from men, a far more powerful check

upon your licentiousness, than the fear of damnation from him who is the judge and the discerner of men? The mind is ever crowded with thoughts, and wishes, and purposes, that pass, in busy succession, through its chambers of imagery, and minister the food of its unremitting contemplations. Tell me how much of God and of godliness there is in them all. Turn the inward survey upon yourselves, and report to us how much of this heavenly fruit groweth and flourisheth there. O you have but spied the nakedness of the land—God is unto you a wilderness, and your heart is to him a spiritual desolation!

This emptiness of a man's heart as to the recognition of God, runs throughout the whole of his history. He is engrossed with what is visible and secondary, and he thinks no farther. The sense of a present and presiding Deity, is habitually absent from his soul—and just because he will not stir himself up to consideration, that he may lay hold of God, is he bounded, as if by an impassable limit, to earth and to earthliness. It needs a force of thought and of reflection, to bear him across this barrier, which, whether from indolence, or carnality, or a misgiving conscience, he does not choose to put

into operation—and thus, does he live without God in the world. When he enjoys, it is without gratitude. When he labours, it is without the impulse of an obedient loyalty. When he admires, it is without carrying the sentiment upwardly unto heaven, whence all that is lovely on the face of our world, was strewn for its embellishment, and the delight of its beholders. And thus, may a traveller on his tour of recreation, through some goodly land, be carried forward from scene to scene, till the whole landscape of an empire shall have passed behind him like a shifting panorama—and, as he eyes the beauteous succession of verdant fields, and massy foliage, and the many pictures of comfort or elegance in human habitations, and the rapid variety wherewith, in the speed and the turning of his movements, he is, at one time, closed upon by the limits of a sweet and sequestered valley, and, at another, breaks out in full and open perspective, on the glories of half a province—why, may all the ecstacy he feels be lavished on the spectacles before him, without one thought of that master hand, which spread out the whole of this magnificence, and poured the tide of lustre over it. No piety may mingle with this contemplation—and not for the want of knowledge, but the want of thought, may there be

as little of God in the eye of this raptured enthusiast, as in the brute unconscious gaze of the creature that hath no understanding.

Now, this is God's controversy with man in the text. He there complains of our heedlessness. He feels himself slighted, that we so seldom think of him, and that he should be thus neglected and set at nought, by his own offspring. And this inconsideration of ours, is matter of blame, just because it is a matter of wilfulness. Man has a voluntary control over his thoughts. He can turn and transfer them from one object of mental contemplation to another. He may think of God when he chooses. He may recal his scattered imaginations, and summon all that is within him to an act of attendance upon God. He may bid his mind cease from its rambles, and its reveries, and lift itself up to the abode of the Eternal. He may lay an arrest on the processes of the inner man, and say to it, with authority, that now is the moment for an aspiration, or a solemn feeling towards God. He may repeat and multiply this effort into a habit of seriousness. It may mix itself in with his ordinary business. It may accompany him on his walk, even through the streets of the crowded city. It may season the hours of his

social fellowship; and what, at first, is difficult, and irregular, and rare, may thus, by dint of perseverance, settle down into an habitual tendency. He may, at length, be familiarized to the thought of God, as his master and his owner—and, at length, putting on the attitude of a daily and hourly obedience, as the eye of a servant looketh towards his master, so may his eye be ever towards God. This is not the attitude of nature, but it may be tried and practised, and, at length, effectually learned. But you will never reach it, unless you begin; you will never succeed in it, unless you persevere. And, therefore, my plain advice to you is, that you now set to it in good earnest. Lay a mandate upon your thinking faculty, and send it heavenward to God. There is many a useless moment that may thus be turned to account—many an idle waste in our existence, that may thus be reclaimed to sacredness. This is true spiritual education—the practice of godliness, instead of the theory—the way of going about it—and by which the soul may, at length, be disciplined to the habit of setting God always before it.

It is the absence of this habit which constitutes the ungodliness of man. There cannot

be a fouller provocation than that man should be satisfied to do without God—and this is the provocation inflicted by all who have other cares and other pleasures, which take up the whole of their hearts, and have no room there for God, or for godliness. Each of you can best tell whether you fall under this description of habit and of character. Is it not the truth now, that God is scarcely in all your thoughts?—that you feel no encouragement in any of his promises, neither do you tremble under the fearfulness of his denunciations? that you are otherwise employed than in the prosecution of your interest with him? and are busied with plans, and objects, and anticipations of your own, wherewith his will, and his glory, have nothing to do? This is your guilt. This, in the estimation of Heaven's jurisprudence, is the very essence of sinfulness. Quite consistent, we do admit, with much to soften and much most honourably to signalize you—but involving you in the direct charge, that none of you understandeth, and none of you seeketh after God.

IV. But the distinction between those who only know, and those who also consider, is never more strongly marked than in the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. And fearful is the hazard,

lest knowledge, and it alone, should satisfy the possessor; lest he should settle down into a treacherous complacency, because he has made a right adjustment of the articles of his creed; lest he count it enough, that he has acquiesced, at all points, in the orthodoxy of the question; and so come forth with a flaming Christianity, that lies more in dogmatism than in devotion, more in a sturdy intolerance of error, than in a true and tender sincerity of heart. And the very controversies of the church have served to foster this delusion. The very quantity of debate and of argument that has been expended on theology, leads to a most hurtful misconceiving of this matter. You know, that the design of argument is to carry you onward to a set of just and accurate convictions. This, in fact, is the landing place to which it brings you, and at which it leaves you—and the danger is, that having brought you there, you go no further—and this place of arrival becomes your place of rest, and stationary residence. It is the pride, and the ambition, and the zeal of every intellectual combatant, to carry the understanding of his reader—and having done this, he is apt to sit down and be satisfied with the triumphs of his gotten victory; and the scholar himself, seized with the very same infection, may sit down, too,

as if he had attained an ultimate good, in which he may rejoice, and where he may now securely and fearlessly repose. And yet, the whole amount of his acquisition may be a mere notional Christianity—a list of doctrines that are settled and set by—that are as much within the grasp of his knowledge as many other articles of human speculation and science—but are just as little reiterated upon as they by a habit of frequent and feeling consideration. And hence a familiar exhibition to all who live in this our scholastic land, where a people, fresh from their catechisms, are primed and charged with orthodoxy, and all whose articles stand before you in well-marshalled and metaphysical array—who have a religion in their heads, but that has there an almost exclusive occupancy—whom many a stout defender of the faith would rejoice in as his own, but in whom the Author and the Finisher of faith, finds little of that love or that obedience which to him are the alone tests of discipleship—a people whom none can challenge for ignorance, but whose still unmortified tempers, and still unabated worldliness, may prove, that though they do know, yet they do not consider.

It were well, if such a people could be extri-

cated from the strongholds of their yet impregnable antinomianism. It were well to alarm their conscience with the saying, that no knowledge and no belief will give them justification, which does not give sanctification also. All their doctrinal acquirements are precisely of as little avail as is the knowledge of death, if they think not of dying—or, as their knowledge of a God, if they give no earnest heed to him. It is well that they know; but the blessing is turned into a condemnation and a curse, if, while they know, they do not consider.

There are no topics on which there has been so much of controversy, or that has given rise to so many an elaborate dissertation, as the person and offices of Christ. And, doubtless, the scholarship has been well employed, that rescued from the entanglements of sophistry, the precious truth of the divinity of our Saviour. And well may England rejoice in those lettered ecclesiastics, who have put down, as far as argument could do it, the infidelity that decried the truth of his high and heavenly apostleship. And worthier far, than all the revenue of all her colleges, is the return of criticism and of demonstration that they have made in behalf of his great sacrifice, and of his unchangeable and

ever-during priesthood. Yet, let it not be disguised, that the knowledge of all these *credenda* is one thing, and the serious, the practical consideration of them, is another—that many a commentator has mastered the difficulties of the question, who has not been solemnized by the thought of its urgent and affecting realities —that stalled orthodoxy, with her clear understanding, but untouched heart, has often launched upon heresy her mighty fulminations, and manfully asserted the truth which she never felt—that the peasant may catch direct from his Bible, what the dignitary has gathered by wading through the erudition of distant centuries; and this veriest babe in literature may outstrip the literary giant, because he not only knows the truth, but wisely and duteously considers it.

Let us, in like manner, look unto Jesus with the eye of a plain Christian, instead of looking to him with the eye of a profound critic, or commentator. For this purpose, let us lay hold of things that are palpably and unambiguously told of him, and see whether, without learning of him that which we do not know, much might not be made by considering of him that which we do know—and whether, out of such mate-

rials of thought as are within reach of all, there might not a far more solemn impression come upon the heart, and a far more powerful influence upon the character, than are to be witnessed even among the most zealous and declared professors of our day.

First, then, he is the Apostle of our profession, or we profess him to be our Apostle. Let us consider him as such. Let us bethink ourselves of all which this title implies. It means one who is sent. The twelve were called apostles, because sent to preach the Gospel unto every creature. And, in like manner, he too is an Apostle, because sent by his Father into the world. He came to us from a place of deep and unknown mystery—he traversed that domain which separates the land of spirits from the peopled and familiar land in which we dwell—he burst upon our senses from a region where all is invisible—and far more wonderful than if he had been a visitor from another planet than our own, did he light upon our world from the dwelling-place of him who is the uncreated source of all worlds, from the very abode and sanctuary of the Eternal. How it ought to move us with awe at the approach of such a messenger, when we think of the glory and the

sacredness of his former habitation!—of those ineffable communions that he had with the Father before the world was—and deep insight into all those mysteries of God, that are to us unsearchable! How it ought to fasten upon it the gaze of every mortal eye, that on the shore of our world there has been an arrival from the dark and the shrouded infinity which lies beyond it—that, at length, out of realms which are afar, a traveller hath come; and that, though veiled from everlasting in the obscurity of a remote and lofty nature, he hath now stood revealed to the observation of human senses, and poured forth an utterance that can be taken up by human ears!

And what ought to fasten upon him a still more intense regard, he comes with a message to our world—he comes straight from the Divinity himself, and charged by him with a special communication—God had broken silence, and this great Apostle of our profession was the bearer of that voice which speaketh from heaven unto the children of men. It was a thing of mighty import, indeed, that there should have been an actual errand to us from the pavilion of the Almighty's residence—that one familiarly acquainted there should have come to taberna-

cle here, and to enter upon converse and companionship with men—that he did announce himself, and on satisfying credentials, to have been sent amongst us from the upper paradise with tidings that he had to deliver, and on a work that had been given him to do. And it ought, at least, to make no difference, that now he has returned to the place from whence he came. For he left behind him the records of his wondrous embassy—and the authentic and the authoritative voice of heaven still speaketh to us there—and with our hands upon the Bible, we are in contact with the very materials of a communication from the Deity. In the breast of the Godhead, there was a motion and a desire towards our species, and here is the expression of it—the very transcript of that message which our Apostle brought, and which our Apostle left amongst us—the word that actually came from the secret place of the Eternal, and is fraught with those revealed things, which now belong to us and to our children. I declare not a novelty in your hearing. It is not a matter of which you are ignorant, and which you need to know. But it is a matter of which you are woefully heedless, and which you need to consider. We do not need to teach you what is new. But we need to arrest you by the sense

of what is old and forgotten. We charge your neglect of the Scriptures of our faith upon your neglect of that great Apostle, who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. By your daily indifference to the word that is written, you inherit all the guilt, and will come under the very reckoning of those, who, in the days of the Saviour, treated with neglect and indifference, the word that was spoken. Our challenge against you is, that the Bible is to you a thing of insipidity—that it is not desired by you as the aliment of your souls—that though unread for days together, you miss no necessary food, you feel no vacancy, you are visited with no hunger, you can do very well without this nourishment of the spiritual life, and so give reason to fear, that within you there is no spiritual principle to sustain. And looking unto that of which this written document is the memorial, do we charge upon all who slight the perusal of it, that they trample into insignificance a formal embassy from heaven—that they treat with contumely the messenger who came thenceforth unto our world—that God by him has spoken, and they have disregarded—that the daily spectacle of the Bible before their eyes, is a daily solicitation on the part of Christ to be heard, and by their continued heedlessness to which,

they, all their lives, set his character, as an Apostle, utterly to scorn.

The way to repair this treatment, is forthwith to give your diligence unto the book—and to press upon your moral sense, as you open it, that now you are about to enter into converse with God—and thus to fix and solemnize your attention, while you read those words of which Christ may be called the Apostle or the messenger. The act of reading the Bible, is the act of holding conference with the Deity—and while this is what all know, this is what few consider.

There is one topic which stands connected with the apostleship of Christ, and that stamps a most peculiar interest on the visit which he made to us from on high. He is God manifest in the flesh. In the character of a man, hath he pictured forth to us the attributes of the Divinity. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person—yet, in virtue of the humanity wherewith he is invested, hath he offered, even to the eye of sense, a palpable representation of the Godhead. "He who hath seen me, hath seen the Father"—and we, by fastening our attentive regards upon his person and history, may gather

the very aspect and lineaments of the King invisible. That Being, who had been so long wrapt in profoundest secrecy from our world—that Being, whom none could apprehend, for no eye of mortal could carry him through that dark and untrodden interval, by which the two regions of sense and of spirit stand apart from each other—the Being, who ever since the entrance of sin, had laid his jealous interdict on the approaches of our species, and withdrawn himself by a remote and lofty separation away from us—he, at length, broke out from this veil of deepest mystery, and in the person of him who is at once his representative and his Apostle, does he now stand before us in visible manifestation. And we, by considering this Apostle, learn of God. By looking unto him, we look unto the likeness of our Creator, and we become acquainted with him. In the purity, and the gentleness, and the simple majesty of Christ, do we read the characteristics of the Deity. And O how it concerns us to know, from this narrative of unwearied well-doing, that there is so much of benevolence in heaven—that the Sovereign who sits in high authority there, is as good as he is great—that there is a meekness to soften the majesty of his nature, and a compassionate longing after those men whom the hand

of justice was lifted up to destroy—that even in the holy of holies, there dwells a tenderness for our degraded species—and could the securities of heaven's throne only be upholden, that there were a good-will and a mercy on high, ready to burst forth upon our world, and to circulate, at large, over all its families.

But this leads us to another topic of consideration, the priesthood of Christ. The atonement that he made for sin has a foremost place in orthodoxy. It is reiterated in all our catechisms. It forms the burden and the argument of many a ponderous dissertation. And to the popular mind, too, is it fully as familiar as to the accomplished scholar in theology. Insomuch, that scarcely an individual can be met with, even in the humblest walks of society, who does not know, and who could not tell, that Christ died for the world. But as we have often said, there is a knowledge without consideration. A truth may be acquired, and then cast, as it were, into some hidden corner of the mind, may it lie forgotten, as in a dormitory. And thus it fares with many a precious doctrine of the Bible. We learn it most readily from the question-book. We give the vote to it of our most prompt and zealous affir-

mative. We enlist it among the articles of our creed—and espousing it as our own belief, do we become partizans, or even advocates in its favour. And yet all this may consist with an entire practical heedlessness—with a deep torpor and unconcern about that truth which may have come to us most abundantly in word, though not at all in power. The soul may be habitually inadvertent to that as a principle, which is most zealously professed, and even contended for as an opinion. And accordingly, we are told by the apostle, of this very doctrine, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, how possible it is for men to receive it, yet not to remember it—that they may have once committed it to their understanding, as an article of faith, without having charged it upon their memory as an article of hourly and habitual recurrence—that it may have been consented to by the mind, without being dwelt upon by the mind—in which case, says Paul, you have believed in vain; and just because you keep not in memory, or, rather, consider not, and call not up to memory, that which I have preached unto you.

And, therefore, would I again bid you consider him who is the High Priest of your pro-

fession. I call upon you ever and anon to think of his sacrifice—and to ward off the legality of nature from your spirits, by a constant habit of recurrence, upon your part, to the atonement that he hath made, and to the everlasting righteousness that he hath brought in. Without this, the mind is ever lapsing anon into alienation and distrust—and the habitual jealousy of guilt, when not met, at all times, by a sense of that blood which washeth it away, will throw us back again to our wonted distance from God—and instead of breathing the free air of confidence in him, or rejoicing in the sunshine of his reconciled countenance, there will be a flaw of suspicion in all our intercourse, and instead of loving him as a friend, we shall still stand in dread of him as an accuser. There may be the occasional recognition of Christ, and, perhaps, along with it a gleam of light and of liberty. But the general state will be, that of a mind which is overcast. And, therefore, to keep all clear, and habitually clear, would I advise a regular forthgoing of your believing thoughts, to the great decease that was accomplished at Jerusalem. I would have you to look unto Jesus Christ, and unto him crucified, and be lightened thereby. Forget not that for guilt there has been an appropriate remedy provided

in the Gospel—and the way for you to stand delivered from all your fears of its vengeance and its agony, is to think of the vengeance that has already been poured out, and of the agony that has already been endured for it. Be very sure, that when justice is satisfied, then mercy, set at large from this obstruction, is free to rejoice over you. And justice is satisfied. The sufferings of the garden and the cross, have absorbed it all—nor after Christ hath poured out his soul unto the death for you, will it seek, in the horrors of your condemned eternity, for a double redress, and a double vindication. O come out then from the prison-house of despondency—and, when you think of your sins, think also of the ransom which has been paid for them. On the strength of this, do make your resolute stand against the spirit of bondage—and looking, and looking hourly unto the victim who has already bled a full expiation, do uphold yourself in the confidence, that sin is made an end of, that transgression is finished, that reconciliation for iniquity is made, and that now the believer, released from captivity, may walk before God in the security and the triumph of an everlasting righteousness.

In other sacrifices, the priest is distinguish-

able from the victim. Here they are the same. He was the victim when dying. He is the High Priest, now that he is risen again. And thus does he still plead, in the ear of God, the offering that was once made, and the power of which endureth continually. That incense, with the savour of which, God was well pleased, he is at all times well pleased to be reminded of—and only consider him who fills his mouth with this argument in behalf of all who repair to him, who can argue his sacrifice as an adequate redemption for the chief of sinners, and whose glory as a physician and a Saviour, is most illustrated, when the most desperate of offenders come unto him, and are healed. It is not enough, that you have, at one time, imported this into your understanding, and given it a place there among the articles of your belief. It is by keeping it in memory—it is by renewing upon it your mental acts of faith and of dependance—it is by again and again repairing to it—and looking habitually unto him as your Intercessor and High Priest, even as the children of Israel looked daily to Jerusalem, at the times of their morning and evening sacrifice. It is thus, that peace is kept up in the heart—it is thus, that instead of coming upon us at starts, and in the shape of a momentary visitation, it

maintains the continuous flow within us, of a river that is at once mighty and inexhaustible. It is thus, that this doctrine of our faith, instead of having only once made its entrance into our creed, is used by us at all times as a cordial—and the thought of Christ, as our acceptable and all-prevailing High Priest, is often present to the mind, and always felt to be precious.

And never forget that the way to maintain peace of conscience, is also the way to maintain purity of character. This is a mystery of the Christian life which the world apprehendeth not—and yet so realized, we think, by universal experience, that never do we reckon, in the history of the church, or in any of its members, had wilful sin place at the same time along with a full exercise of faith on the testimony of God. It is peace in the conscience, in fact, that keeps up love in the heart. It is this which, by putting joy, and hope, and confidence in the bosom, furnishes the soul with the most powerful springs of obedience. It is this which awakens gratitude in the bosom, that erenow was beset with the cold distractions of legality; and under the constraining influence of the

love of Christ, is it ever found, that the most joyful believer is also the most fruitful believer, living no longer to himself, but to Christ who died for him, and who rose again.

FINIS.

Printed by W. Collins & Co.
Glasgow.

00067903

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 03 December, 2015